

FIGHT RACISM! FIGHT IMPERIALISM!

Revolutionary Communist Group

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STAND UP FOR YOUR RIGHTS



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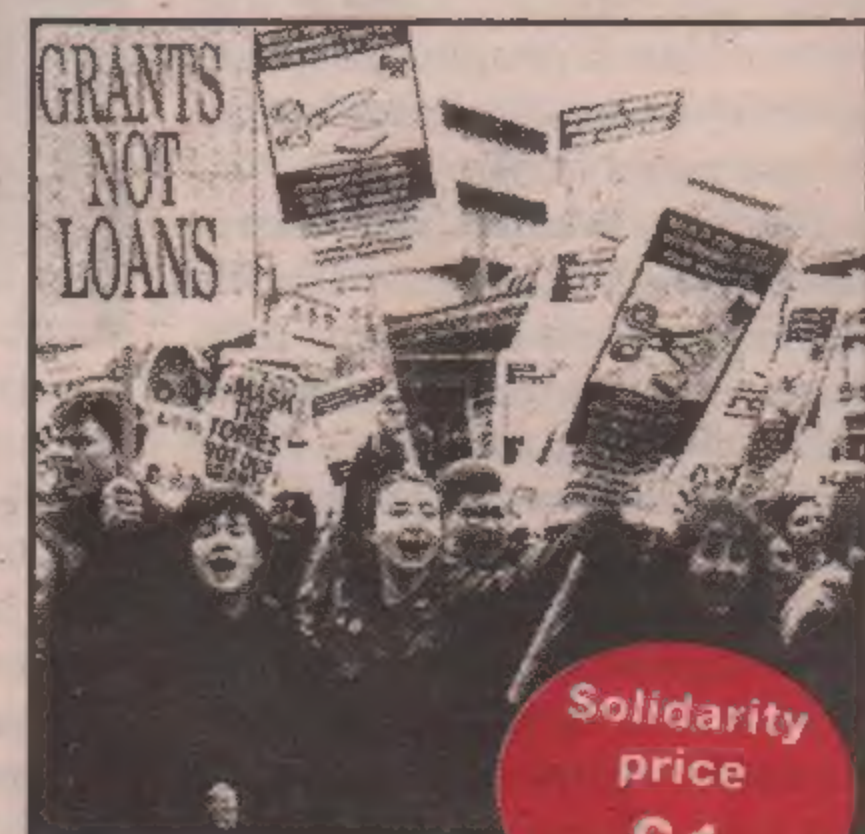
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Solidarity
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Arms, secrets and 'dam' lies

MAXINE WILLIAMS

It is an iron law of politics that the greater the bungle and the more widespread the responsibility for it, the more urgent is the need for a fall-guy. Step forward Sir Nicholas Lyell, Attorney General. He has become Prime Suspect in the arms for Iraq scandal. The recent part of the Scott inquiry has echoed with cries of 'He made me do it, I didn't want to'.

He made them do it? Made them sell arms to Iraq? Made them



The Attorney General leaves the Scott Inquiry after giving less than convincing evidence

cover up the fact that they were pouring armaments into Iraq whilst telling Parliament that they were not? No, not that. He made them sign the Public Interest Immunity Certificates that meant that the Matrix Churchill gun-runners might go to prison for carrying out government policy. By concentrating on these certificates, the real issues of Iraqgate can slip quietly off to the sidelines. Everyone

can concentrate on the much less dangerous issue of the Matrix Churchill prosecution.

This sidelining of the real issue – the government's role as wheel-greaser for arms companies – was always the danger of the Scott inquiry. For what outraged those sections of public opinion which the government listens to was not the fact that arms were sold to Iraq up to the outbreak of the Gulf war, but the fact that the Matrix Churchill managers, one of them a British agent, were prosecuted. For them the real issue is that the government was willing to

tem. Even politicians, subjected to different pressures, cannot always be trusted to do this.

A similar process happened in the Pergau dam affair. Mrs Thatcher and Lord Younger were happy to overtly link the sale of £1bn of British arms to Malaysia with a British aid package. The £234m of aid was to be used to build a dam which, whilst of no use to the Malaysian people, would bring in large fees to British construction firms and, no doubt, a nice rake-off for the Malaysian elite. They saw nothing wrong with this, nor do its Tory defenders today who call it 'batting for Britain'. But wiser counsels, cautioning of the need to preserve the hypocritical niceties, prevailed. Whilst everybody has always known such deals were linked, they must be hidden. So the Malaysians were still given the aid and the arms were still sold, but the Malaysians were written to saying that the deals were not linked. That made everything all right then.

As Pergau shows, British taxpayers pay a heavy price to subsidise the arms industry. But the coal mines must, and other public industries must, 'stand on their own feet'. The price is not only financial. At the Scott inquiry, the thousands of words, the sophistry, the lawyers' arguments, conceal the simplest of truths. The British economy depends on arms sales, made usually to the most corrupt and vicious regimes. The rot lies right at the heart of the system.



Asylum seekers on hunger strike

BILL HUGHES

Since 4 March, over 200 asylum seekers in Immigration Service detention centres and jails have been staging a mass hunger strike. At least one hunger striker is now hospitalised, and there have been persistent reports that others are being force-fed. The Home Office is now transferring hunger strikers to prisons in an attempt to isolate and disrupt the protest. MPs have been denied access to Campsfield House where the hunger strike began.

The hunger strike is taking place as evidence emerges that the use of detention has sharply increased since the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act became law in July 1993. Around 200 asylum seekers were detained in early 1993; more than 720 were incarcerated in the same period this year. It is estimated that around two-thirds of detained asylum seekers are held in prison service establishments.

Over the same period since the Asylum Act became law, there has been an unprecedented rise in the rate of refusal of asylum claims. In the second half of 1993 refusal of asylum applications rose to 3,475: 72% of all decisions. Over the same

period decisions to grant asylum seekers exceptional leave to remain dropped from 76% to 22%. It is clear also that particular national groups are being targeted for mass refusal; in 1993, 99% of all asylum seekers from Angola and Zaire had their claims refused.

Campsfield House in Oxfordshire opened at a cost of £5 million and is operated by Group 4. It has places for 200 detained asylum seekers. By 17 March more than 100 detainees at Campsfield were continuing to refuse food. A rooftop demonstration had also been organised. The protest rapidly spread to more than 10 other prisons and detention centres, including HMP Haslar (near Portsmouth), Harmondsworth detention centre (near Heathrow), Hull, Canterbury, Pentonville, Wandsworth and Wormwood Scrubs.

In the absence of any extended campaigning by the anti-racist movement, it is asylum seekers themselves who have again focussed attention on the use of immigration detention without trial. Under the administrative powers of the immigration laws, asylum seekers can be detained indefinitely, without being charged with any offence and with no access to bail. This policy criminalises people who have had to

escape oppression and persecution, and is totally racist in its denial of basic rights that are agreed under international law.

For asylum seekers who have experienced imprisonment and torture in their countries of origin, the consequences of further imprisonment can be devastating. Indeed many of the hunger strikers show clear physical evidence of having been tortured before arriving in the UK. The protest at Campsfield has exposed the totally inadequate medical facilities there. One visitor remarked that 'paracetamol seemed to be the standard treatment'.

By resisting criminalisation and demanding legal rights, the asylum seekers' protest has opened up real possibilities of building a sustained national campaign against immigration detention without trial. In Oxford, the Campaign to Close Campsfield has already organised pickets and material support for detainees. Demonstrations are held on the last Saturday of every month outside Campsfield. A national march and rally is planned for 4 June. The Campaign is also asking people to donate BT Phonecards, which are given to detainees.

Campaign to Close Campsfield:
Tel: 0865 722357
Campaign Against Immigration Act Detention: Tel: 071 254 970

Unity against racism

ANDY HIGGINBOTTOM

On 19 March the Trades Union Congress got off its knees for a rare walkabout in London's East End. The TUC's call to 'Unite Against Racism' attracted some 30,000 protesters. But the demonstration was really an exercise in manipulation, diverting the desire for united action against racist attacks into service for the Labour Party.

Tower Hamlets Liberal Democrat council refused permission for the demonstration to end in a park in that borough. In retaliation, the TUC refused to let Paddy Ashdown speak. Given Labour's own record of racism it might seem odd that the TUC took this 'No platform for racists' line, but they are ruthlessly pursuing Labour's narrow party interest. And Labour's concern is focused on the 5 May local elections; it needs the votes of black people badly and is therefore hastily brushing up its anti-racist image.

Black politicians who see a career for themselves with the party provide a necessary link. Marc Wadsworth announced the Anti-Racist Alliance's 'Vote Against Racism' campaign from the platform. The day before Labour issued a statement reporting increased racial attacks and proposing legislation to make racial harassment a criminal offence. That morning

the TUC published figures showing that unemployment has risen seven times more for black workers than white.

The unions have not fought this racism and very few trade unions were present on the 19 March demonstration. The TUC's own ailing body had to be propelled by the twin legs of the SWP/Anti-Nazi League and Militant/YRE who formed the biggest contingents.

Yet just five months ago these forces seemed at logger-

organisers of the Welling march had a choice: keep up the pressure, organise a new movement against police terror as well as fascists, or back down and reforge their links with Labour and the TUC. So they backed down.

The result was that the 19 March demonstration had the support of the Labour movement leaders but at the cost of leaving the fascists alone; its circuitous route avoided Brick Lane and other known trouble



heads with the Anti-Racist Alliance. On 16 October riot police brutally attacked over 50,000 anti-racist demonstrators in Welling whilst elsewhere in London a couple of thousand joined ARA's 'peaceful' protest.

The SWP, Militant and IWA

spots. The number of demonstrators on this 'mobilisation' was halved from 16 October. This is not building a united movement to fight racism, it is destroying it.

19 March was not simply a tactical retreat from the militancy of 16 October, it shows

the SWP's and Militant's craven abasement of any independent class politics to Labour's needs. Labour must have a united front behind it for the elections and the organisations of the petit bourgeois left have duly fallen into line as foot soldiers for the machine.

Whatever the limitations of its sectarian Labour Party platform, the TUC could not entirely bury the voice of struggle. RCG comrades and others heckled Tony Blair.

Several black speakers asserted the right to self-defence. Neville Lawrence, whose son Stephen was murdered by fascists nearly a year ago now, pointed to the police failure to make any arrests. Yet three Asian youth have been arrested recently. The man with Neville then stepped forward and explained that he had been in prison for resisting racist attackers. And he asserted to applause, 'Better to be in jail for self defence than dead'.

Is death or prison to be the only choice for black people? No, a new movement is necessary and possible. The vital lesson to draw from recent events is that the Labour Party can neither deliver on its anti-racist election message nor be at the centre of an effective movement. As the RCG leaflet put it: **Unite to fight racism – break with Labour and the TUC!**

No care in the community

BOB SHEPHERD

In February a report into the death of Jonathan Zito, killed by Christopher Clunis, a schizophrenic, was published. The report was a damning indictment of the Tories' so-called 'care in the community' programme for the mentally ill.

Christopher Clunis, a discharged patient, had stabbed and killed Jonathan Zito, a complete stranger, at a London tube station in December 1992. He had been released from a short stay in hospital in September, after previously being charged with assaulting a fellow resident at a hostel for homeless men.

The report, while concentrating on conditions in London, shows that shortages of psychiatric beds is a growing problem in all major cities. It was a major factor in the killing of Zito, and is forcing more patients onto the streets, with no proper housing or medical aftercare.

As one of the report's authors put it, 'it's not enough to have a brief period of admission in a unit and then be sent out to get on in bed and breakfast as best as possible.' But that is the essence of the 'community care programme'. In the world of trusts and 'internal markets'

there's little profit to be made out of mental illness.

Over the last ten years the NHS has closed 35,000 psychiatric beds. The National Schizophrenia Fellowship says over 100 mentally ill people have committed suicide since the government began emptying hospitals, and over 40 people have been killed by seriously mentally ill people in the same period. There are an estimated 250,000 people suffering from schizophrenia in Britain.

The report has a list of recommendations for improving psychiatric care and calls for 'a considerable injection of funds' as the only answer. The government will not do this. Its agenda is to do all in its power to cut expenditure on the NHS and social services.

Jayne Zito, Jonathan Zito's wife, has campaigned for better care for the mentally ill since the death of her husband. She is determined that the government should be forced to fund the report's recommendations. She said: 'It's not enough to make a market out of mental health. These people need care and supervision. You cannot compete when you are dealing with people's lives ... I am holding Virginia Bottomley accountable for the murder of Jonathan.'

Palestine

The Hebron massacre

EDDIE ABRAHAMS

On 25 February 1994, Baruch Goldstein, a recent US settler in Hebron, emptied two full clips of a Galil assault rifle into a Palestinian congregation at the Ibrahim Mosque. Almost instantly 48 Palestinians died. In the ensuing mêlée Israeli soldiers killed six more Palestinians. More than 300 were wounded. The Zionists immediately claimed the murders to be the action of a lone and demented individual.

Such claims were discredited immediately by witness statements and subsequent developments. Israeli soldiers allowed Goldstein to enter the Mosque, even though he was armed. While Goldstein was spraying the helpless worshippers with deadly bullets, Israeli soldiers did absolutely nothing to stop him. Israeli soldiers have standing instructions never to shoot a settler, even if that settler is in the process of killing Palestinians.

Even more shockingly, as a taxi driver told the Palestinian Human Rights Information Centre: 'People tried to run away, but soldiers came into the Mosque and used tear gas at the entrance and also opened fire at people. It was impossible to tell who was shot by the settler and who by the soldiers. It all happened at once.'

Widespread settler support for Goldstein was open and unashamed both at his funeral – he was killed by those worshippers who managed to avoid his bullets – and at demonstrations in his support. The sentiments of these legal death squads were expressed by Rabbi Perrin who said that 'one million Arabs are not worth a Jewish finger nail.' Despite this the Israel government has resisted all demands to disarm or expel the settlers from the Occupied Territories.

In the wake of the Hebron massacre, the Israeli government, rather than control and punish the settlers – they are after all the 'advance guard' of the government's grand design for the colonial conquest of the

whole of Palestine (see *The New Warlords: from the Gulf War to the recolonisation of the Middle East*) – has intensified repression against the Palestinian population. In the first eight days after the massacre 33 more Palestinians were shot dead by Israeli troops. One day after the massacre, the government sealed off the Occupied Territories and imposed the most extensive curfew since the December 1992 expulsion of Hamas supporters. Today while Hebron's 120,000 Palestinian population has been kept under lock and key for over four weeks, the town's 400 settlers are free to walk the streets armed to the teeth and under army escort.

As bloody and savage as the

wanted Hamas terrorists' had taken refuge in one of the houses.

International reaction by the US and EC was as cynical as always. Their only concern was that the massacre would force the PLO to withdraw from the Israeli-PLO 'peace-deal' whose aim is to eliminate the Palestinian Intifada and peacefully surrender Palestinian self-determination. Imperial responses were therefore geared to forcing some minor concessions from the Israelis in the hope of enticing the ever-malleable, bourgeois PLO leadership back to the negotiating table.

Clinton invited PLO and Israeli representatives to the US for urgent and open-ended dis-



Armed Zionist settlers routinely patrol in Palestinian areas

settlers are, they are not the Palestinians' principal enemies. The Israeli state and government are. It is this state that subsidises the settlers to the tune of millions of dollars and arms and protects them. Without Israeli state and government backing the entire population of 120,000 settlers would be driven out of the Occupied Territories overnight.

The settlers do not after all have the means to wield the lethal military force of the Israeli army, a demonstration of which was made on 23 March. Heavy artillery was used to demolish five Palestinian homes in Hebron killing an unknown number of inhabitants and bystanders. The government claimed that four 'most

cussions. The Israeli government was persuaded to release some political prisoners and ban Kach and Kahane Lives – two small fascist organisations – leaving intact the entire fascist settler military and social infrastructure. The PLO was pressurised to resume talks. But the main Palestinian demands – disarming and removal of the settlers and an armed international force to monitor the Israeli occupation – have in substance been rejected.

In this context one can only hope that popular and progressive opposition to the PLO-Israel 'peace-deal' grows sufficiently strong to thwart it, mounting a renewed and determined struggle to end the occupation and destroy the Zionist state. ■

municipal elections on 27 March.

For the ruling class, the tensions can only be removed by destroying the Kurdish people's struggle. However, this attempt might initiate a civil war spilling over into the cities, and might be self-destructive for the bourgeoisie given the fact that bourgeois democracy is paralysed as a safety mechanism, and the political power of the PKK based on mass support cannot easily be defeated. Any attack on the Kurdish population in major cities by the police or civil fascist organisations under state supervision can lead to unpredictable political consequences out of which Islamic fundamentalism can emerge as the sole beneficiary, able to seize on the opportunities available, effectively mobilising workers for their own fundamentalist Islamic political programme. ■



Black majority flexes its muscles: five white racists died in Bophuthatswana

South Africa:

Hopes outstrip election promise

CAT WIENER

By the end of March the expectations generated by the election process amongst the black working class were expressed in mass protests. It is clear that popular hopes for change far outstrip the limited democracy on offer from the National Party/ANC alliance.

Riots and hungerstrikes in many jails in South Africa, culminating in the tragic death of 21 black prisoners, finally forced the Transitional Executive Council (TEC) to backtrack on its decision not to extend the vote to prisoners. The TEC had insisted that prisoners in western 'democracies' do not vote, ignoring the fundamental issue that most prisoners are black, imprisoned by a racist regime for crimes committed under apartheid.

On 11 March street protests in the so-called independent homeland of Bophuthatswana turned to popular uprising as the security forces came over to the side of the protestors. Thousands of right-wing Freedom Alliance extremists swarmed over the border expecting to take advantage of the confusion to create a white *volkstaat*: they were routed by the homeland army and five of their number killed. 50 people were killed in all, the majority of them by white racists bent on revenge.

The protests had the immediate aim of overthrowing hated homeland leader Lucas Mangope, who had refused to contest the elections or allow any free political campaigning. But the TEC initially sent in the SADF to prop up the dictator, in ex-

change for participation in the elections. Mandela's contention that 'even tyrants are entitled to form an organisation and campaign for support' met with a chilly response from a packed meeting in Bophuthatswana on 16 March. When he condemned those who had looted wealthy white shops around Sun City – 'that is not how decent people behave' – the audience began to stream out. Poverty in South Africa's homelands is endemic: 80 per cent of black people eke out a living at less than subsistence level, dependent on remittances from labour in white industrial South Africa. The vote will mean very little if it cannot address these fundamental issues.

When Ciskei erupted, the TEC again sent in troops to 'maintain stability' – in this case to support Brigadier Oupa Gqozo, the butcher of Bisho, continuing their long tradition of political and financial support to murderous homeland leaders.

Although it is only now that they are being released, the main findings of the Goldstone Commission have been common knowledge for years: political violence is funded and resourced at the highest level by the security forces, including attacks on commuter trains, political assassinations and the arming and training of Inkatha supporters. The report implicates three of the country's most powerful police officers: deputy commissioner of police Lieutenant General Basie Smut; head of counter-intelligence Major General Krappies Engelbrecht, and commander of the CID, Lieutenant Johan le Roux. The report, however, whitewashes

de Klerk's role; it beggars belief that, as head of the Security Council, he did not know of senior officers' activities. Nearly 15,000 have died in the last four years – no security force member has ever been indicted. The three officers have merely been sent on leave 'pending further investigations'. Even if charged they will almost certainly be amnestied.

Making the report public now is an attempt to damage Inkatha's standing amongst black people. Bophuthatswana has entered the election process; the far-right is in temporary disarray following the Bophuthatswana fiasco. This leaves Inkatha as the main threat to the electoral process. Kwazulu has issued a declaration of UDI; Natal is in a state of civil war; attacks have escalated in recent weeks, including the murder of election campaigners and one election monitor. ANC officials accept that there can be no prospect of free and fair elections in the area, nor in Thokoza. Inkatha is waiting for 'the second election' – clearly envisaging a long, bloody war of attrition.

Nevertheless, the elections will certainly go ahead; the ANC is predicted to win a large majority. Whether they win the two-thirds majority needed to write the constitution is irrelevant; they are already committed to power-sharing with the nationalist regime. Their Manifesto promises jobs and housing on a mass scale, but with no nationalisation and assurances to big business that taxes will not be raised, it is not clear how this will be funded. Meanwhile the interim constitution provides for significant limitations on the working class. It enshrines the right to lock out alongside the right to strike, and maintains the anti-union Labour Relations Act. It retains the right of detention without trial. Regional provisions – which guarantee whites 30 per cent of council seats – were denounced by the PAC as fundamentally racist.

On the crucial question of land, it guarantees only the right to *claim* restoration; claims will be considered where 'feasible' and land sold back to the claimant – at market value – only with the consent of the (white) occupant.

What is clear is that the aspirations of the black majority, of the prisoners and homeland dwellers who died for the right to vote, will not be met, and popular unrest will continue. ■

End of the
gravy train . . .

On 28 February-1 March, City of London Anti-Apartheid Group activists attended what will probably – to judge from its self-congratulatory tone – be the last meeting of the European Liaison Committee of the Anti-Apartheid Movement.

Of the 100+ delegates present, City AA was the only group to raise fundamental questions about the right of prisoners to vote; the retention of repressive legislation in the interim constitution – such as detention without trial; and international funding for organisations such as the PAC and AZAPO.

The main concern of most of the other delegates appeared to be catching the 'UN Observer' gravy plane to South Africa in time for the celebrations.

Conflict and crisis in Turkey

DENIZ YAKARH & TREVOR RAYNE

Turkey is in economic crisis, with inflation at around 100% and the Turkish lira has been devalued by 12% in January alone. Central bank foreign reserves have declined by about 40% in three months. Escalating military expenditure, subsidised agriculture combined with an inadequate tax base have lead to increasing budget deficits. Companies contracted to the government are not being paid and bankruptcy looms.

This economic crisis is directly related to the political crisis. The state has been unable to solve the 'Kurdish Question'. When Tansu Ciller, the prime minister of Turkey, was assigned to her post she declared her immediate political programme would be to solve the 'Kurdish Question' and the economic crisis. Now, with the failure of the army to

defeat the PKK and its supporters, Ciller's government faces a crisis of legitimacy compounded by the economic problems.

Into this context has stepped the Islamic fundamentalist Refah (Welfare) Party. It poses as a challenge to the established parties by offering an alternative political programme that feeds on anti-Western culture and sentiments, makes popular appeals against usury and speculation as well as courtroom corruption in state offices, prostitution and alcoholism. It finds support especially among small retailers, artisans, peasants, lumpen-proletariat living in ghettos and finally among big merchant capitalists. Today, it has its own domestic source of income eg savings banks, small retail shops, charity funds. The Refah Party claims it will get over 20% of the votes in

RCG addresses Turkish rally

BOB DERBYSHIRE

At the end of January the Turkish SiP (Party for Socialist Power) held a major rally in Istanbul to commemorate the murder 72 years ago of Mustapha Suphi, one of the founders of Turkish communism, and fourteen of his comrades, by the Turkish bourgeoisie. The rally was a chance for the SiP to show that the government's banning of the STP (Party for a Socialist Turkey) last year had not destroyed socialist organisation in Turkey.

600 people crammed into the hall to listen to revolutionary music, including that of Ken

Bodden from the RCG. Messages of support were read out from the Communist Party of Cuba, and given by representatives of the RCG and Workers World Party of USA. Amongst the revolutionary banners, one read: 'The party cannot be silenced', in response to the banning of the STP. The evening's programme was continually interrupted with thunderous shouts of 'Kurdistan – socialist! PKK – socialist!' Five members of the SiP in Ismir were in prison for distributing propaganda in support of the struggle in Kurdistan.

The rally showed that the comrades of the SiP have not been cowed by the repression of the Turkish government. ■

No Joke

The Union of Hangmen

Gavin Laird, boss of the Engineers Union, is a man who knows his priorities. He was questioned in the *New Statesman* about what law he would pass if he had free rein. As head of a trade union, you might predict employment protection for union members, or the wider working class. How naive you are! Given *carte blanche*, Mr Laird would bring in the death penalty for murdering police or prison officers. This puts him to the right of the current Conservative government. Relax, Gavin, some drooling old bore is keeping a seat in the Lords warm for you. In that hallowed chamber there will be many who can personally recommend the delights of hanging and flogging.

Uses for nooses

Talking of which, this column warmly welcomes the lemming-like trend for Conservatives to hang themselves, thus saving a future revolutionary regime the trouble. No satire could rise to the occasion when our rulers are revealed as types whose idea of rest and relaxation is slipping into stockings and throttling themselves. It is appropriate that late capitalism, an era of death and decay, should be incapable of producing sexual behaviour of a life-affirming and human type. It has become a dance of death in a graveyard.

Food poisoning - you got it

That most basic of basics, food, is also perverted in such an age. It has long seemed that the eighth wonder of the universe is that billions of people eat at MacDonalds. Sitting on plastic chairs, apparently designed to make you intensely uncomfortable after 2½ minutes, people actually pay to eat something that looks and tastes as though MacDonalds have finally cut out the alimentary middleman. Two penniless environmentalists now face prosecution by this giant multinational for questioning MacDonalds' methods. And how does MacDonalds, master of the mass market, want the case heard - without a jury. The issues raised by their food are apparently too complex to be judged by the people who have to eat it. Given their immense wealth it is no surprise that they won - no jury will now hear the evidence.

Much fury is being whipped up about the German government's sensible decision to ban British beef on health grounds. Not only are 800 BSE-ridden cows a week still being slaughtered, but now it is revealed that tasty carcasses covered in ulcers as a result of bovine HIV, are going into the food chain. Mainly into pies and hamburgers. Big bag of pus with french fries? You got it!

Buck pass

Things have come to a pretty pass when MI5 has to start opening the letters of the Chief of Defence Staff. Sir Peter Harding became a risk to national security when he had an affair with Lady Bienvenida Buck. She evidently lacked the quality of loyal self-effacement which is so important for women in a rich man's world. A staunch supporter of a new back-to-basics morality for the army (killing is fine: adultery is off), Sir Peter has had to resign.

Not dead, only lying

The TUC seems unworried by the dwindling ranks of trade union members. Indeed, it would be more worried if things got livelier. It recently commissioned a poll which showed that more than 55% of the public would support a one-day strike by public sector workers. What a disaster! The public supporting trade unions. So the TUC suppressed the result. Now if 99% had said they would oppose the strike, that would have been a different story.

Fife

Women workers win victory

MICHAEL TAYLOR

In the same week as International Women's Week and the TUC's Women's Conference, and a couple of days before the start of the Scottish Labour Party Conference, some very determined women workers at Victoria Hospital, Fife showed the way to fight and in doing so merited no attention whatever from the above events.

Having already lost out on bonus and holiday pay when hospital cleaning services were first privatised, the women showed very effectively that they were not going to be exploited further. A new firm, Mediguard, took over the contract and refused to transfer previous conditions.

On hearing this news on 7 March, 225 of the women staged a sit-in at the staff social club at Victoria Hospital, Kirkcaldy. They were determined to re-

main there until dismissal notices were withdrawn and Mediguard conceded and gave guarantees on maintaining present conditions.

Victory was achieved after 24 hours, while Mediguard bussed and flew in replacements in a short-lived scabbing operation from as far away as Preston, Blackpool and Aberdeen. Despite ending their short occupation on Tuesday, the women were in no mood for trusting management and remained on strike until a mass meeting the following day accepted Mediguard's surrender.

This was not at all the account given by the *Morning Star*, which gave all credit to the union reps and officials for 'settling' the dispute, making no mention of the occupation. The paper claimed that 'notices were withdrawn when ... officials intervened' and the women workers were only mentioned as being at a mass meet-

ing to hear a 'union official ... report of talks with the company' and then to agree 'unanimously to return to work as a gesture of good will'. The shop steward was all for surrendering only a few hours into the occupation and he is reported as stating that the women's conditions need not be met fully: if 'Mediguard come up with half a decent offer we will be the first to say to the staff to accept it.'

The rot was only stopped by a couple of hundred determined working class women taking the struggle into their own capable hands and fighting for women's and workers' rights. They have nothing at all to learn from the male-dominated Labour and trade union movement.

It is the women who have consistently fought recently, in the pit struggle, Burnsalls, Timex, Middlebrook. Out of such struggles a fighting women's and working class movement will be born. ■

Pensioners campaign for a really adequate pension

RENE WALLER

Pensioners are fed up with receiving a pension which, unless supplemented by an occupational or private pension, is insufficient even to cover their basic needs. Why should men and women who have worked all their lives not even be entitled as of right to a pension enabling them to lead a decent and full life without having recourse to income support and the means-testing this entails?

We are currently petitioning the Queen as head of state, having been ignored by the Prime Minister and the government. Judging by the support I've received when petitioning this could prove to be the biggest

petition ever presented and I'd urge all readers to sign, whatever their present age, so see if there is a pensioners' group in your area and offer your support.

Pensioners are increasingly getting organised and more aware of their potential strength - in my borough we are one in five of the population and I suspect it's much the same in all inner city areas. There are not only pensioners action groups in many districts; pensioners forums have been set up with the support of local authorities, where irrespective of creed, political beliefs or the colour of their skin, all pensioners are free to go along, voice their needs and complaints and so make sure their wants are

known and precisely defined.

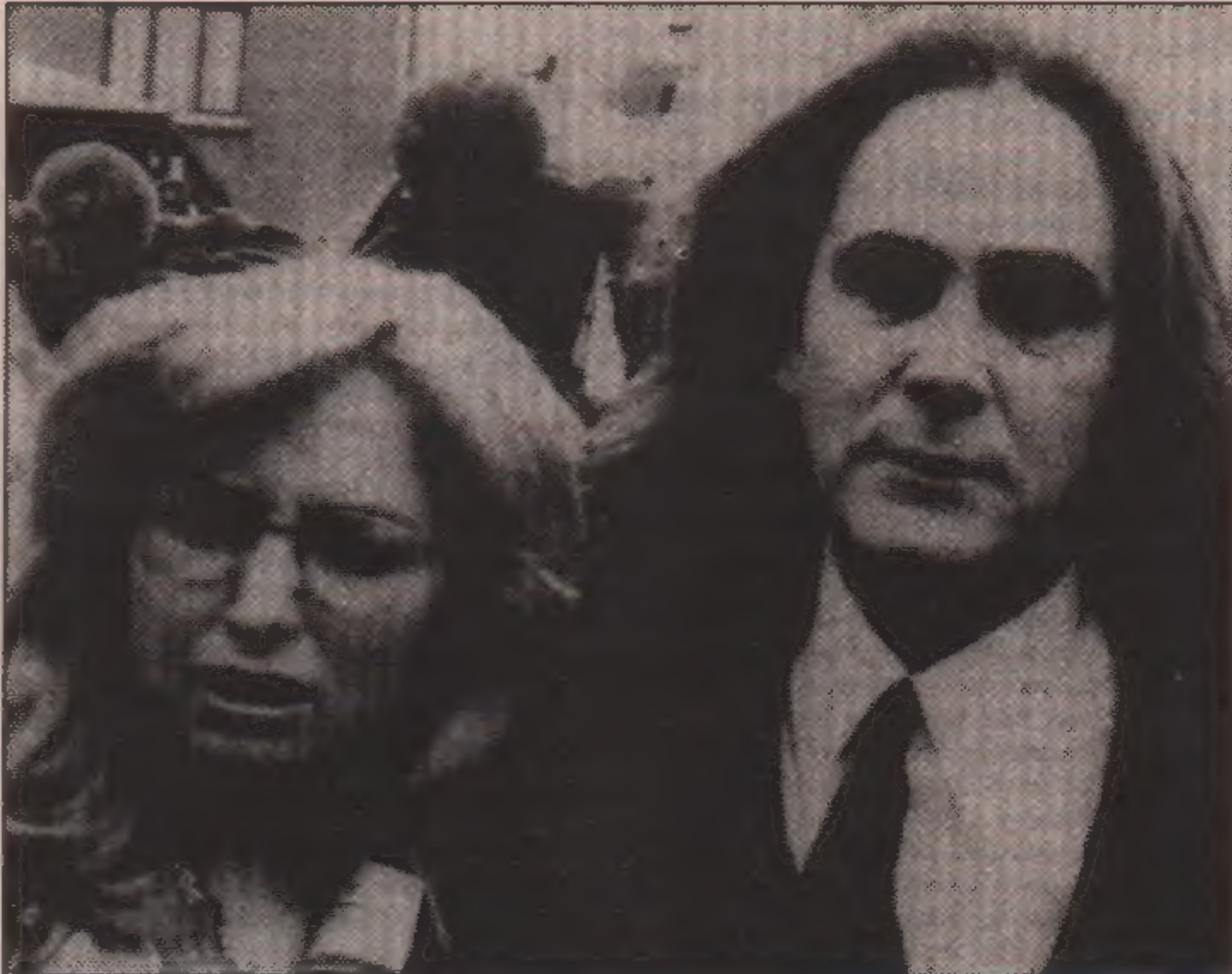
The aim now is to have a forum set up in every area. A talking shop? Yes - but one that can lead to action! In fact, where there is a good pensioners' forum, small grievances such as inadequate street lighting or badly maintained pavements, are often put right quickly, to prevent bother. Well, of course, bad or non-existent housing would need a lot more pressure to secure attention. Publicity leading to public exposure is however still a powerful weapon that pensioners like others can use. For it is not only petty criminals who prefer to work in the dark - so let's turn the searchlight full on shady deals as well as shady corners. ■

Armed police threatened Paul Hill

NICKI JAMESON

Tory press coverage of Paul Hill's appeal against his 1975 conviction for killing an ex-British soldier, has concentrated, in large part, on the Kennedy family and the victim's family rather than the obvious: that Paul Hill was arrested and tortured by the British state and that this conviction must be as 'unsafe' as those for bombing Guildford and Woolwich.

Lord Gifford QC, defending Paul Hill, has produced unsailable evidence that at least ten Surrey police officers were 'guilty of, or party to, serious impropriety, particularly in the rewriting of handwritten notes'. And, despite the Crown's opening contention that there were no armed police in the Guildford police station at the time Hill 'confessed', its own witnesses went on to confirm that armed police were present and that an unloaded revolver was indeed pointed and 'fired' into a cell containing one of the Four by PC Gerry Queen. The testimony of anonymous police witnesses was confirmed by



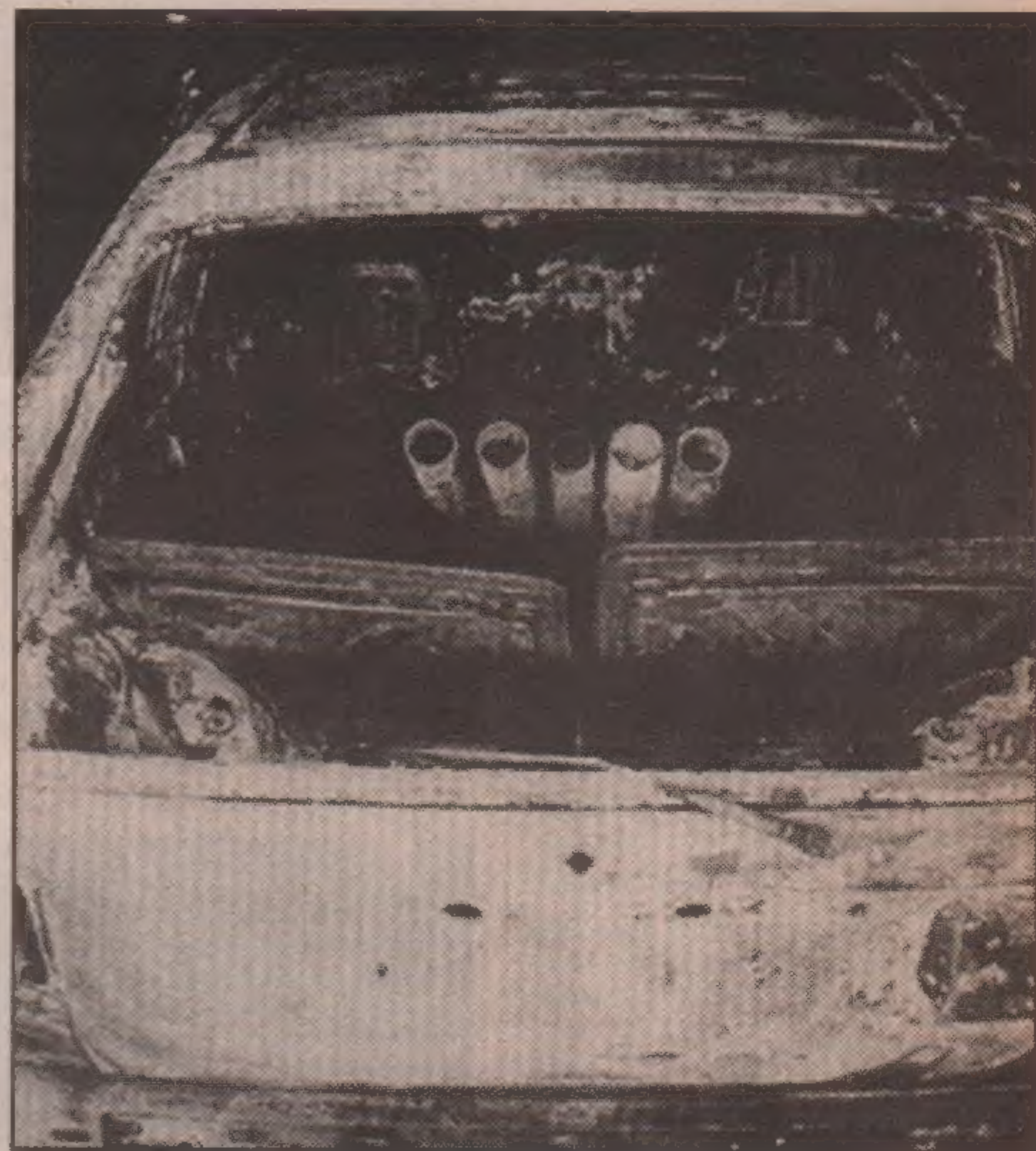
Paul Hill and his wife outside the Belfast appeal court

Christopher Rowe who in 1974 was Surrey police assistant chief constable.

So another piece in the jigsaw of the framing of innocent Irish men and women is revealed. If the assistant chief constable knew there were guns, so did others; if at least ten police officers falsified notes, then the practice was widespread.

Judgement in the case has been reserved. If the appeal judges uphold the guilty verdict, it will be a kick in the teeth, not only for Paul Hill, but for all those campaigning against frame-ups and corrupt police practices. If the verdict is overturned, the question must be raised of further prosecutions of police officers, at a far higher level than previously. ■

IRA mortars Heathrow airport



'You can with a Nissan'

PAM ROBINSON

The IRA proved yet again their ability to strike at will in defiance of the British state, when they launched three successful mortar attacks on Heathrow Airport. In four days, a total of 12 bombs landed on Heathrow's northern and southern runways and on the roof of Terminal Four. In the first attack, on 9 March, four mortars were launched from the back of a Nissan Micra, giving a new meaning to the advertiser's slogan 'You can with a Nissan'.

There were no injuries sustained in any of the attacks. It has since been claimed that some of the mortars were not primed to explode. But the police, who obviously could not have known this at the time,

have been criticised for failing to close the airport after the first attack. Metropolitan Police Commissioner Paul Condon admitted that a six-hour advance warning about the attack on Terminal Four was ignored. Finally, after the third attack, flights were diverted to Stansted at a cost of £10,000 for every diverted flight.

The British press has pontificated on the damage the attacks have done to the so-called peace talks. The reality is that operations such as these are part of the struggle for a just peace. When it comes to talking with those it oppresses, the British state only understands the language of force. Let it disarm and remove its forces in the occupied Six Counties, including the Loyalist death squads. Only then can it expect Irish Nationalists to do the same. ■

PTA renewed in annual ritual

MAXINE WILLIAMS

The now-ritual annual renewal of the PTA proved livelier than normal this year when the IRA launched several mortar bombs on Heathrow while the debate was taking place. This proved to be the most politically appropriate contribution to the discussion of an Act that has been in force for 20 years and has terrorised thousands of Irish people.

Labour found itself in the unusual position of voting against an Act which a Labour government had first introduced. They are now uncomfortable with the clauses of the Act which allow people who are, legally speaking, UK citizens, to be excluded from mainland Britain to the Six Counties. They also want a judge rather than the Home Secretary to approve holding a suspect under the Act for longer than 48 hours. The PTA allows detention for seven days. Terrified

that their vote against the Act should be interpreted as 'going soft' on terrorism, Labour took its usual line that its policy would be more effective against the Irish struggle than the government's.

Labour and Tory policy on the Irish question has been broadly the same, its major concern being the suppression of the Irish struggle for freedom. And despite the little hiccup of having to vote against the PTA, Labour's instinct remains firmly bipartisan. Hence John Smith's annoyance when government leaks revealed that he had met John Major to try to come to some compromise that would prevent Labour having to oppose the renewal of the Act.

Twenty years after the 'temporary' PTA was introduced, it remains an important part of the state's repressive apparatus against the Irish people. Whilst the politicians debate nice points about its workings, they get beaten up in police stations, deported and spied on. ■

CLASS LAW - TORY ORDER

When Home Secretary Michael Howard introduced the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill 1994 in December 1993, he hailed it as the most comprehensive and largest law and order package ever produced. It is also probably the most coercive of the last decade: a rag bag of measures to deal with the worst nightmares which prey on the minds of Home and Shire Counties' Tory voters. Ravers, hunt saboteurs, new age travellers, 'gypsies', 'terrorists', road campaigners, squatters, working class youth, political demonstrators are all its targets. Extra powers are included to deal with prisoners, including prison ships, as are measures to imprison children aged 10-14 in private prisons. 'I want to make it easier to catch, convict and punish the guilty', said Howard, a vulgar and philistine Thatcherite.

No one would imagine that the catalyst for this legislation was the uncovering of many miscarriages of justice perpetrated during the 1970s and 1980s, in particular the Guildford Four, Birmingham Six, Judith Ward and Stefan Kiszko. Even the timid and often ill-conceived recommendations of the two-year-long Royal Commission which followed have been ignored. The main provisions of the Bill do nothing to protect the innocent: on the contrary, its central measure - the removal of the right to silence - will ensure a landslide of miscarriages of justice in the future. The only difference may be that they will never be uncovered.

The right to silence

The right to silence is fundamental to the English adversarial system of criminal law. It embodies the doctrine that you are innocent until proven guilty. Accused people are under no obligation to prove their own innocence - the burden of proof lies with the prosecution. If the Criminal Justice Bill becomes law, all this will change. The Bill states that if you are questioned by a constable, at any time before being charged or at the time of being charged, or even at the time you are told you might be charged with an offence, and you fail to mention anything on which you later rely in your defence, a court or jury may draw any inference from your silence that they think proper: ie that you are guilty. The Bill goes further to apply the same strictures if you are questioned by a person other than a constable 'charged with the duty of investigating offences'. This person could, for instance, be a store detective or security guard.

Further still, you will no longer have an unfettered right to remain silent at your trial. In court the judge, who in English law is supposed to be neutral, will call you to give evidence. If you refuse for whatever reason, the judge or jury may infer your guilt. It was in relation to this measure that the Lord Chief Justice managed to bleat a criticism, not on behalf of the unfortunate accused, but to point out that it will infringe the judge's fictional neutrality.

If you are arrested and refuse to explain to a constable (or other investigator) any substance, object or mark on your person or in your possession, or at the place of your arrest which that constable believes is connected with the offence, then a court can draw any inference it wishes from your silence. Similarly if you are arrested and fail to account for your presence at a particular place, the same consequences follow.

Supporters of the removal of the right to silence, argue that the innocent have nothing to fear, and that, anyway, very few people exercise their right to silence when questioned by the police. But the realities are very different. Many of the miscarriages of justice which shook the legal system in the late 1980s stemmed not from the right to silence, but from confessions forced



New powers to stop static demonstrations, hunt saboteurs and road campaigners

out of people in police custody. The removal of the right will once again put the emphasis on what is said, or not said, by the accused at a time when they are at their most vulnerable. In fact the 'innocent' have most to fear, under pressure to respond to questions in oppressive circumstances. The Bill specifically refers to questioning 'at any time' - this can easily become a failure to answer questions in a police van, or car - the notorious 'verbals' where the evidence rests on a police officer's word against yours in the absence of your legal advisor.

'I want to make it easier to catch, convict and punish the guilty'

Collective trespass and nuisance on land

These provisions give the police the right to remove trespassers and to seize vehicles if there has been 'damage' to the land (this includes litter), or threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour towards the occupier, or there are more than six vehicles. Together with a repeal of obligations on local authorities to provide legal camping sites (which they have never fulfilled), this section of the Bill is particularly aimed at traditional travellers and new age travellers. It is, like many other aspects of this Bill, an attempt to reinforce the vested interests of land owners. Vehicles can be seized and repeated trespass becomes an offence with a possible sentence of three months in prison.

Particular provision is made for 'raves': a gathering of 100 or more people in the open air, whether or

not trespassers, with amplified music. The police will be able to prevent the 'rave' taking place, arrest the participants for not following a direction to leave, stop anyone suspected of going to a 'rave' within five miles of the venue, seize the equipment which may be forfeited on the direction of the court.

Hunt saboteurs and road campaigners will be subject to a new law of aggravated trespass if they trespass on land in the open air and obstruct or disrupt a lawful activity or intimidate people engaged in such an activity. They may be either arrested or directed to leave the land, with the additional provision that they are banned from re-entering the land for seven days.

Trespassory assembly

In the 1986 Public Order Act, the law relating to demonstrations and assemblies was extended to require notification to the police and provisions for banning demonstrations. Static assemblies (20 or more people) could not be banned, but senior police officers could place restrictions on time, place and size if there was a threat of serious public disorder. The 1994 Bill proposes to extend these powers considerably. If a Chief Officer of Police (or Commissioner in the Metropolitan Police or City of London Police) believes that a proposed assembly on land to which the public has no right of access or only a limited right of access is likely to be held without permission of the occupier, or exceeding the limits of access rights, and may result in serious disruption to the life of the community, or where the land or building has historical, architectural, scientific importance, may result in damage, he may apply to the local council

(Home Secretary in London) for a ban not exceeding four days for an area not exceeding a five mile radius. Organisers and participants become arrestable for not complying with a banning order. If a constable in uniform reasonably suspects you are on your way to such an assembly he may stop you and direct you away. Land to which the public has limited rights of access includes the highway.

Ostensibly directed at Stonehenge gatherings and the like, these provisions strike at the heart of the freedom to demonstrate. In particular, the trigger of 'serious disruption to the life of the community' could be interpreted very widely. This term was first used in the 1986 Public Order Bill in relation to banning demonstrations and restrictions on assemblies, but was amended to the stricter requirement of serious public disorder.

The common thread between these trespassory provisions, including criminalisation of squatting, is that the rights of land owners, animal hunters, and the middle classes in general will be enhanced at the expense of our right to dissent or demonstrate.

Preventing 'terrorism'

This section of the Bill is a post hoc provision to legalise the activities of the City of London police who have



Protestors squatting flats in Westminster - squatting will be a criminal offence

operated permanent security road blocks round the City of London illegally. Any Assistant Chief Constable will be able to follow their example for a renewable period of 28 days if he believes it is expedient to prevent acts of terrorism. The additional powers allow the stopping and searching of people or vehicles without any reasonable grounds of suspicion. You are guilty of an offence if you fail to stop or you obstruct a search.

A further paragraph of the Bill makes it an offence to possess any article for a purpose connected with acts of terrorism. No person will be able to collect, record or possess any information which is of such a nature as is likely to be useful to terrorists in planning or carrying out an act of terrorism. This catch-all provision could include almost anything.



No place to stay for travellers

Opposition to the Bill

When the Tories introduced their two major policing bills in the 1980s, the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 and the Public Order Act 1986, considerable opposition forced them to back down on a number of draconian powers. The 1994 Bill has met no opposition except from civil liberties organisations and some lawyers. This is remarkable for a Bill which makes major incursions into fundamental rights. Liberty (the National Council for Civil Liberties) believes that the Bill contains at least five potential breaches of international human rights laws.

Howard has promised further measures relating to restricting even further the right to jury trial, rigorous guidelines for punishment in the community and home leave for prisoners. As we go to press he has produced a consultation paper on a new 'independent' review system to deal with criminal appeals, which was one of the recommendations of the Royal Commission. There are few details included on how this will work, simply because there is no intention ever to implement it. Howard can instigate a few years of further 'consultation' and then forget about it. In view of the pathetic opposition in Parliament, he is pretty sure he will get away with it.

In the 1980s the Labour Party was prominent in opposing the extension of some police powers, under the pressure of widespread anger at Tory proposals. Today they are bidding for recognition as the 'law and order' party and for the votes that go with this. When it came to the second reading of the Bill in February, Labour was very proud to have dashed Tory expectations that they would vote against the Bill - they abstained. Labour's new Police Federation representative went even further 'by tabling amendments, alongside his Tory counterpart, to deal even more harshly with ravers and travellers. The amendments would criminalise gatherings in a building as well as the open air with no mention of numbers and give police even more powers to prevent raves. It's amazing what a bit of sponsorship will do.

Anyone who believes that a future Labour government might repeal this Bill had better think again - even now in the role of 'opposition' party they are too spineless to do more than whimper. In government they will happily dance to the tune of their middle-class voters.

Carol Brickley

British Aerospace and Rover: banks say NO!

After angry scenes at the British Aerospace shareholders' meeting, Rover formally passed into BMW's hands on 18 March. The majority at the meeting were against the takeover. The banks and City institutions which hold the bulk of the shares nevertheless cast their votes and on a basis of one share one vote, the result was 119.6 million votes for the takeover, 2.9 million against. They confirmed what had been decided some time ago: Britain's last domestically owned car company could go. TREVOR RAYNE continues his examination of Britain's multinational companies by examining the forces behind the deal.

British Aerospace (BAe) had looked for a £1.5 billion funding arrangement with the City to Keep Rover British. The banks said, 'No!' Although Rover made a small profit in 1993 it still required a credit facility averaging £1 billion over the course of the year to meet its bills. BAe approached Honda who said they would pay £165 million to increase their 20 per cent stake in Rover to 47.5 per cent. This values Rover at £600 million. BAe would still be saddled with the funding costs. BMW had watched, calculated then moved in with an £800 million bid for BAe's 80 per cent share. The banks, the City and BAe's board of directors took it. BAe's shares jumped 30 per cent in a week.

Responses to the sale were understandably mixed: the sale of Britain's last remaining car firm amidst the decline of British manufacture was bound to cause some alarm in ruling class circles. It brought together competing interests: BAe's need for short-term cash combined with the British state's need for a viable defence industry; BMW's need for Japanese standard production technology combined with growing resistance from European capital to Japanese encroachments on its markets. The sale also highlighted a dilemma facing the British ruling class: whether to attempt to halt British capitalism's decline by reviving industrial production or whether to pursue the readily available profits from the world's speculation markets and investment overseas. Industry Minister Tim Sainsbury said that ownership of Rover was a low priority compared to its profitability. In other words, it does not matter where the profits come from or what the consequences are so long as profits flow in. Financial Secretary Stephen Dorrell, addressing the CBI, spoke of his worries about City 'short-termism'. For a Conservative government minister to express such concerns is a measure of the scale of the collapse of British industry and the anxiety of manufacturing capitalists at the headlong dash towards a casino economy. The Rover deal was unmistakably in his mind when he listed his doubts; high dividend pay-outs to shareholders, lack of lasting relationships between finance and industry, the banks' preference for short term loans, the demand for high returns on high-tech projects and the difficulties in finding funds for them. What Dorrell was listing are the effects of the crisis of profitability of British industry and capital's irresistible drive towards parasitical speculation that produces nothing but money out of money. *Guardian* economic journalist Will Hutton welcomed Dorrell's speech; he saw it as a potential harbinger of

institutional reform in the City that may revive British industry. As if the City and the banks were not the product of the law of capital accumulation in the oldest imperial nation. As if capital were not destined to become moribund and parasitical. Hutton's proposals to put the City at the service of industry denies its very purpose, to make profit; if industry could make adequate profit the City

and two in Europe – and one will not be called Rover.' John Cahill, outgoing chair of BAe.

Car and weapons production are 'capital hungry'. To develop a new car costs well in excess of £800 million. In arms production the global market is getting more competitive. Since 1989 the US share of world exports has risen from £6 billion a



Too late – the banks had already decided

would invest in it, but British industry has moved beyond that point and the City looks elsewhere.

Every capital, be it the money invested in BAe or the money in BMW, must increase its productivity to accumulate. At some point the rise in productivity results in a tendency for the rate of profit to fall. In the world car and arms industries this point has been reached and there occurs an over-accumulation of capital shown by unsold stocks. Increasingly, the drive to accumulate requires the extension of credits to fund both production and purchases. However, as the bills mount up and insufficient money is deposited, the banks both restrict the credit and increase its cost. Such is the fate of BAe and Rover. More generally, in the car and arms industries capital turns to the stock market where in huge concentrations capital devours capital and industry is centralised in the hands of a few monopolies. Giant combines attempt to use their monopoly power to increase the mass of their profits and raise prices to continue accumulation. When BAe registered a £1.2 billion loss for 1992 something was bound to go.

Huge costs

'I could see the car industry concentrated one day into six companies: two in the US, two in Japan

year to £15 billion. European defence exports have fallen over the same period from £10-12 billion to £4-5 billion. Arms producers are facing huge research and development costs running on for 10-20 years. They are forced to collaborate in joint-ventures. The £22 billion Eurofighter requires the combined capital and labour of BAe, Rolls Royce, the German, Italian and Spanish aerospace industries.

In the car industry Ford is engaged in joint-ventures with Mazda and Nissan, Chrysler with Renault and Hyundai, Ford bought up Jaguar in 1989 for £1.6 billion, General Motors joined with Saab and so on.

Their combination not only pools finance and expertise but also credit facilities. When BAe bought Rover in 1988 its shareholder funds rose from £1.1 billion to £2.2 billion. This was seen as reinforcing its financial position to support its most profitable business – weapons. The additional funds plus the expansion of the asset base should have increased the amount of credit available to BAe and thus the amount it could grant to its own weapons' customers. However, by 1990 interest rates were rising and assets that consumed credit became an increasing burden.

With the weapons market squeezed by British military spending cutbacks scheduled until 1996 and by US competition, BAe and its banking

advisers concluded that Rover had to go. The *Financial Times* commented, 'In the defence business the up-front costs of development can be formidable, and not all customers can afford them. Now, BAe is in a position to offer more financial help to customers as a means of clinching the contract.' The British government has long been willing to offer more 'financial help' using taxpayers' money to subsidise BAe.



'It's not corruption'

When BAe was registered as a public limited company in 1981 it was the seventh major arms producing firm in the world. When the government sold its 48 per cent stake in 1985 the £550 million offer was tightly restricted to institutional investors. BAe bought Rover for £150 million and immediately put it on its books valued at £1 billion. The government made a £547 million injection into the company and the infamous 'sweeteners' worth £38 million to BAe were organised by Lord Young from the Department of Trade and Industry. These 'sweeteners' included illegal tax concessions which the European Commission later instructed BAe to pay back.

Although the deal was agreed in 1988 BAe did not pay a single penny until March 1990. In that time it had made £22 million in interest on the purchase price of £150 million, had income from selling Rover cars and its stake in the Leyland DAF and Istel concerns.

Of course, all this financial skulduggery is merely maintaining the 'financial viability' of BAe. Similarly, the Aid and Trade Provision is a means of installing a credit provision that allows the British company to sell its goods.

BAe's current chief executive Dick Evans was one of the circle that arranged the Malaysian Pergau dam deal, along with two close associates of Mark Thatcher, a Midland Bank consultant and the head of the Ministry of Defence's sales division. The first of 28 BAe Hawk aircraft were delivered to Malaysia in February of this year. They are part of the 1988 £1 billion deal which included £234 million British government aid for the Pergau dam.

In June 1993 BAe won a £500 million contract to supply 24 Hawks to Indonesia. Less than two months previously Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd had visited Indonesia and agreed a £65 million low interest loan to help finance the building of a power station.

When the Al-Yamamah deal with Saudi Arabia worth £10 billion in defence contracts was threatened by delays in Saudi payments the British government agreed to guarantee a £2 billion loan to ensure that a contract was carried out. In 1993 BAe sold £4 billion worth of Tornados to Saudi Arabia.

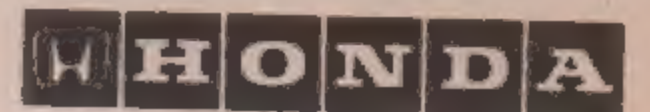


So what does BMW get?

By 1990 Japan had become the world's biggest motor vehicle producer with 27.6 per cent of total output compared to the US' 20%, West Germany's 10.2% and Britain's 3.2%. Japanese production methods have meant that they could, hypothetically, undercut the main European producers by 30 per cent and still make a profit. From 1993 Japan has to control the flow of car exports to the EU countries with the quota being renegotiated every six months towards a free trade in cars by the end of the century. An optimistic forecast of world car sales predicts a growth of 11.8 per cent to 39.84 million between 1989-95 while world car production capacity is estimated to grow by 12.4 per cent to 40.06 mil-

lion. This forecast of sales is due to be revised down as almost all the major European car producers record sharp profit falls: Daimler Benz down 31 per cent in 1992, Fiat down 44 per cent, Volkswagen down 66 per cent, Peugeot down 50 per cent, BMW down 15 per cent. Japanese competition was securing a growing share of the European market recording sales increases of 5-6 per cent a year. With Honda, Nissan and Toyota investing in Britain, the head of Peugeot described Britain as 'a Japanese aircraft carrier off the coast of Europe' and 'Japan's fifth largest island'. By the second half of this decade Japanese firms will have a third of total car production in Britain and a £1.8 billion investment.

In this context it is no surprise that EU Industry Commissioner Martin Bangemann should suggest that European car firms merge to compete plus a EU subsidy worth about ECU 5.3 billion for joint research and development programmes and re-training workers. However, BMW has bought Honda production methods and technology at Rover for £800 million, thereby by-passing research and development costs and acquiring a four-wheel drive vehicle, a front wheel drive vehicle and a small car production capacity which together would have cost about £3 billion to develop.



Little wonder that the Honda chiefs were mad. They suspect a concerted effort by British and German banks in alliance with European manufacture to push the Japanese assault on European markets back. In March Japanese car manufacturers were forced to agree that their exports to the EU be restricted to a growth of 0.4 per cent in 1994.

Anything else?

'They work there for a whole day for the wages we pay a German worker for one hour!' A BMW board member gazing towards the Czech border.

Since 1988 overseas companies have made almost 1,000 acquisitions in Britain valued at £50 billion. This is equal to about half the total value of all cross-border acquisitions in the EU. Such purchases include Rowntree, Beecham, Plessey, Morgan Grenfell, Metal Box, Midland Bank, the Pearl Group, RTZ Chemicals, Jaguar and now Rover. German investment in Britain has risen from DM 8.7 billion in 1985 to DM 26.1 billion in 1992. British investments in West Germany rose only from DM 10.7 billion to DM 13.6 billion over the same period.

Britain is now considered to be one of the lowest cost manufacturing bases in Europe. At current exchange rates British manufacturing wages are 65-75 per cent of German levels. More importantly British non-wage costs (national insurance, pensions etc), are about 40 per cent of wage costs compared to over 85 per cent in Germany. Ford's global strategy uses Britain as a low value-added, low wage assembly point for components produced elsewhere. Now the BMW purchase of Rover signals the drive toward lower wages and higher productivity in Germany as German workers are forced into competition with their British counterparts.

BMW's purchase of Rover not only indicates the crisis of profitability and accumulation of British industry, it is a measure of how inter-imperialist rivalry will force the multinationals into intensified attacks on workers' conditions across the globe; those in the wealthy heartlands are not excepted and British capital is driven to lead the way. It also shows the extent to which the state will go to direct resources into military preparation.

Science for sale

'Could we deny ourselves to the people
and still remain scientists?'
(Galileo, Brecht)

The key to modern biotechnology is the discovery that the information which gives different living organisms different qualities is located in their genes. Genes form part of a chemical called deoxyribonucleic acid, or DNA, which is found in the nucleus of each cell. Scientists have discovered that a strip of DNA containing the genetic instructions for a certain property can be removed and transferred to another organism, thus altering its nature. It is this process, referred to as genetic engineering or recombinant DNA, which is at the heart of biobusiness today.

This is a staggering human achievement, with awesome implications for wiping out diseases and boosting production of necessities for the poor. Already it has been used to advance cures for such genetic disorders as cystic fibrosis. But only a rational society which placed the fruits of human knowledge at the disposal of all could realise its potential – and safeguard against its dangers. Today, science works for corporate capital to produce profits. Its biotech triumphs include a caffeine-free coffee bean for US General Foods; an enzyme which produces cheese faster for ICI; a tomato with a lower water content for Campbell Soups. Such genetically-engineered materials boost productivity and hence competitiveness. They are worth millions of dollars to the companies that develop them. In 1984, the UN estimated the potential biotech market was worth \$50 billion dollars. The market in 1995 has been put at \$103 billion. 'Imagining the profits', said one biotechnologist, 'can unhinge even a sane scientist'.

Since the early 1980s all the major players in the world economy have seized on biotechnology to hold on to and increase their market positions. Companies like Monsanto and Dupont spend around \$190 million a year on biotechnology research and development. Those who cannot afford these sums cannot compete and get eaten up by those who can. For example, the numbers of companies controlling the world pesticides market has fallen during the 1980s from thirty to a dozen. By 1986, 52% of world sales were controlled by the top five corporations: Bayer (Franco-German), Ciba-Geigy (Swiss), ICI (British), Rhone-Poulenc (French) and Monsanto (US). In the pharmaceutical industry, the multinationals spent a staggering \$40 billion on takeovers between 1989 and 1990. One quarter of the top 100 food-processors have been swallowed up by the largest since 1982.

'According to the World Health Organisation, 25 million of these landless labourers are poisoned by pesticides every year.'

At the same time, some of the giants traditionally associated with one area are moving into others to reap the profits that are to be made from biotechnology. Shell, one of the world's biggest oil multinationals, is now also among the top ten seed companies. It has acquired 60,000 hectares of land in Uruguay, as well as large areas in Thailand, for commercial tree planting. As a *Business Week* analyst pointed out, 'It's becoming the waltz of the elephants and the fleas are going to get squashed'.

Biotechnology v the poor

'This is one hell of a profitable business'
(US seed company executive,
Business Week 1975)

It is in agribusiness more than any

Bio-colonialism: the biotechnology business and the third world



The growth of biotechnology, the control and application of life-processes to human ends, has enormously increased the productive capacity of human society. But like the micro-chip revolution before it, the biotech revolution has served only to enrich and strengthen the multinational corporations which dominate the world economy. In their hands, far from relieving the plight of the poor, biotechnology has intensified capital's assault upon them. It has been at the forefront of renewed plunder of the resources of the oppressed nations. It has filled their soils and rivers with poisonous chemicals. It has deprived hundreds of thousands of rural dwellers of their livelihoods. And, SARAH BOND argues that, most ominously, it is steadily eroding the rich biodiversity of large areas of the world which have until now remained outside the sterile embrace of multinational capital.

other industry that biotechnology has boosted the successes of the multinationals. Using recombinant DNA, new crop varieties have been developed which enormously increase yields. The new crops depend upon heavy doses of fertilisers and pesticides, also provided by agribusiness. The *Financial Times* says,



Brazilian rainforests devastated for agribusiness

'For ICI and its rivals, the aim is to create an agricultural package reaching from fertilisers through pesticides to the plant itself, which can be tailor-made through genetic manipulation to fit the maker's system and no one else's'. When Ciba-Geigy developed soyabeans that were resistant to its Atrazine herbicide, sales of Atrazine increased by \$120 million.

The battle for increased market shares between the agribusiness giants has devastated production in the oppressed nations. For example, sugar cane has been a traditional cash crop across Latin America, Africa and Asia, since colonial times. But in the 1970s, the EEC became a sugar exporter, its sugar companies growing the more productive domestic sugar beet. Then sugar giant Tate & Lyle established plantations in Liberia, Ghana and Malaysia for the production of Thaumatin, a genetically engineered substance 250 times sweeter than sugar. Sugar export earnings in the Philippines dropped from \$624 million in 1980 to just \$246 by 1984. In that period the average Filipino's income fell by one fifth. Half a million lost their jobs. Still competition for profits rages on: while new varieties of sugar cane are being engineered which will triple yields, both Tate & Lyle and Unilever are seeking to develop Thaumatin in the factory. Sugar production in the ex-colonies could all but disappear. Agribusiness has also found lucra-

tive markets for its products amongst the rich landowners of the Third World. Since the end of the second world war, the now notorious 'Green Revolution' has spread the use of agribusiness' high yield crops, pesticides and fertilisers across countries such as Mexico, the Philippines, India. The impact on the lives of the poor rural dwellers has been devastating. Small farmers, unable to afford the inputs, have been unable to compete with larger enterprises. Increasing numbers have been driven off the land to form a rural proletariat. According to the World Health Organisation, 25 million of these landless labourers are poisoned by pesticides every year. Others join the swelling shanty towns, with their disease, poverty and squalor.

Biotechnology v the planet

'Conservation of diversity is, above all, the production of alternatives, of keeping alive alternative forms of production.'
(Vandana Shiva,
Indian environmental activist)

The multinationals that control the world's resources are only interested in the profit that can be squeezed from them. An article in the thrillingly-titled *Forestry Management* commented on rainforests, 'Most of the trees ... are, from an industrial materials standpoint, clearly weeds.' This is the corporate view of the life-forms which have the misfortune of sharing the planet with humans.

Tropical rain forests cover only 7% of the earth's land surface but contain at least half of its species. They are being destroyed at the rate of around 7.3 million hectares a year. In the Brazilian Amazon, 2,150 sq kilometres of rainforest were recently flooded to create a reservoir for iron ore and bauxite mining. In one ten-day period, from just part of the flooded area, 4,037 mammals, 4,848 reptiles, 6,293 insects, 717 birds and 30 amphibians were retrieved. But from an industrial materials standpoint, these forests contain weeds.

There need be nothing sentimental about the call to preserve species regarded by corporate greed as weeds or pests. The innumerable but finite varieties of species to be found on earth – which is what is meant by 'biodiversity' – make up the genetic base of life. The broader the base, the greater the evolutionary possibilities: in other words, the greater the chance of survival for different forms of life, including the human form.

History has proven this. When malaria began to spread through Africa some five hundred years ago, a section of the population survived thanks to one genetic difference: the presence of sickle-shaped red blood cells, more able to resist the virus than ordinary cells. (It is these same cells which cause sickle-cell anaemia



Third World families suffer the most

amongst Afro-Caribbean people today.) The lesson is clear: genetic uniformity is dangerous.

As capitalism has developed and become increasingly monopolistic, the planet's biodiversity has been steadily eroded. A few centuries ago, 5,000 food plants were used worldwide: modern agriculture uses around 150. In the USA 85% of apple varieties have disappeared in the last hundred years. Only the Third World, until relatively recently prevented from developing an indigenous capitalism, has retained an abundantly rich biodiversity. Two thirds of the world's species are to be found in the poor nations. Now corporate plunder threatens diversity of life here too. Over the last half century, 30,000 different indigenous varieties of rice are believed to have been grown in India. Now it is estimated that in 15 years this wide genetic base will be diminished to 50 varieties, with the top ten accounting for over three quarters of the subcontinent's rice acreage. 250,000 whole species – a quarter of the world's biodiversity – are in serious danger of extinction in the next 20 or 30 years.

Biodiversity has an added importance for the world's poor. The new monocrops which replace their traditional varieties are grown for grain only. Each plant is genetically-engineered to increase the grain element at the expense of all others. But as Indian environmental activist Van-

dana Shiva points out, 'Rice is just grain, it provides straw thatching and mat-making, fodder for livestock, bran for fish ponds, fuel for fuel'. On top of this, pesticides wipe out 'weeds' which play an important role in the subsistence of the rural-dwellers. For example bathua is a green leafy vegetable with high nutritional value and rich Vitamin A which has traditionally grown in India as an associate crop with wheat. Agribusiness has steadily wiped it out, as a competitor to wheat crops. Today, 40,000 children go blind in India every year from Vitamin A deficiency. In the oppressed nations, the struggle of the poor and the struggle to defend the environment are intimately connected.

Whose life is it anyway?

'If I had a child headed into a career now I'd want him to be a patent lawyer, preferably a biotechnology patent lawyer.'
(President of US biotech firm, 1989)

To protect their control over biotechnology, the USA, Japan and Europe are imposing an international legal framework which gives them free access to Third World genetic resources, and at the same time exclusive rights over the products they develop. Under the latest GAT agreement, 'intellectual property rights' have been included for the first time, forcing Third World countries to provide protection to corporate ownership rights over biotech methods and products. Only capitalism could conceive a legal order in which the very processes of life are capable of being privately owned.

Since the earliest days of the Green Revolution, multinational companies have raided the Third World for genetic material. Today one fifth of the US wheat crop is dependent upon such material, which contributes \$500 million a year to corporate bank accounts. At the same time patent laws give them exclusive rights over the seeds they develop. Third World farmers are then expected to pay handsome royalties for the privilege of using what were originally their own seeds. Carla Hills, US trade representative under Reagan and Bush, complained in 1986 that US companies lost \$60 billion from uncollected royalties.

This is an area of agribusiness operations which has met with some determined resistance from the poor farmers themselves. In India, offices of the giant seed and grain multinational Cargill have been destroyed by peasants furious at Cargill's attempts to levy fines on farmers who plant seed grain, which Cargill claims is patented. 500,000 farmers rallied in the southern city of Bangalore in October 1993 to protest against the recognition of foreign capital's intellectual property rights.

'The battle for increased market shares between the agribusiness giants has devastated production in the oppressed nations'

Sporadic protests have also broken out in other areas of India. In Thailand, commercial tree plantations have been uprooted by poor farmers.

Under the control of corporate capital, the vast potential that biotechnology holds for humanity can never be realised. As long as profit rules, like Goethe's Faust human society's immense knowledge threatens only to bring it to the brink of damnation: 'I have not raised myself one poor degree/Nor stand I nearer to infinity'. As long as the resources of the world – intellectual, biological, human – remain in private hands, no progress is possible. The placing of these resources at the disposal of the majority, and the suppression of the forces who resist, is now the road to human survival.

Speech from the Dock by Joe O'Connell at the Old Bailey on 8 February 1977

There has been an attempt by this court to isolate certain incidents which have been called 'crimes'. These incidents have been put completely outside the context in which they occurred in a way that is neither just nor consistent with the truth. The true context is that of the relationship between this country and our country - Ireland. That relationship is one of a state of war against the occupation of Ireland by Britain...

We say that no representative of British imperialism is fit to pass judgement on us, for this government has been guilty of the very things for which we now stand accused. This government carries out acts of terrorism in order to defend British imperialism and continues to do so in Ireland. We have struggled to free our country from British rule. We are patriots. British soldiers in Northern Ireland are mercenaries of British imperialism. Yet none of them has ever been convicted for the murders of unarmed civilians which they have committed in Ireland.

We are all four Irish Republicans. We have recognised this court to the extent that we have instructed our lawyers to draw the attention of the court to the fact that four totally innocent people - Carole Richardson, Gerry Conlon, Paul Hill and Paddy Armstrong - are serving massive sentences for three bombings, two in Guildford and one in Woolwich, which three of us and another man now imprisoned, have admitted that we did. The Director of Public Prosecutions was made aware of these admissions in December 1975 and has chosen to do nothing...

This shifty manoeuvring typifies what we, as Irish Republicans, have come to understand by the words 'British justice'. Time and again in Irish political trials in this country people have been convicted on the flimsiest evidence - often no more than extorted statements or even 'verbals' by the police.

We admit to no 'crimes' and to no 'guilt' for the real crimes and guilt are those of British imperialism committed against our people. The war against imperialism is a just war and it will go on, for true peace can only come about when a nation is free from oppression and injustice. Whether we are imprisoned or not is irrelevant for our whole nation is the prisoner of British imperialism...

As volunteers in the Irish Republican Army we have fought to free our oppressed nation from its bondage to British imperialism of which this court is an integral part.

The Guilty Men

This is the Roll of Dishonour in the Guildford Four case. Christopher Rowe, Surrey's Assistant Chief Constable in charge of the Guildford inquiry.

Commander Huntley of the Bomb Squad, present in Guildford police station when the Four were questioned. Paul Hill accuses Huntley of actively assisting in beating him down a flight of stairs.

Peter Imbert, then of the Bomb Squad, later knighted and promoted to Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police. Interviewed the Four in Guildford police station. Cannot have failed to notice brutalisation. Questioned the Balcombe Street men in 1975 and heard their confessions about Guildford and Woolwich bombings. The defence were not told of the Balcombe Street confessions by the police.

Lord Michael Havers prosecuted the four both at their trial and their appeal as well as prosecuting the Maguire Seven. Called the glaring discrepancies in the Four's statements an 'IRA plot'. Made career on cases and became Lord Chancellor and Attorney General.

Lord Donaldson was the Guildford trial judge and the Maguire trial judge. Gave the Four massive sentences of life, 30 years, 35 years and natural life. Became Master of the Rolls.

Lord Roskill both refused the Maguires leave to appeal and rejected the first appeal of the Guildford Four. He ensured that the vital evidence of the Balcombe Street men never came before a jury.

Sir Norman Skellhorn, Director of Public Prosecutions, responsible for suppression of the alibi statement for Gerard Conlon and the concealment of evidence and confessions showing that the Balcombe Street Active Service Unit carried out both the Guildford and Woolwich bombings.

Roy Jenkins (now Sir) was Labour Home Secretary at the time of the arrests and introduced the PTA under which the four were arrested. Labour was in government when the Four's appeal was rejected. As late as 1988 the Labour Party NEC refused to take up the case.



Gerard Conlon, released from the Appeal Court on Thursday 19 October 1989

In the of just

What price have the ruling legal and political circles in E
Six? A few red faces and a dollop of taxpayers' money is
of the scores of Irish people involved. The names of the
remembered. More importantly the release of the Guildfo
to try to rehabilitate the system itself. It suggests that th

It seems almost ill-mannered to break this cosy consensus and point out that all of the major factors which made the frame-ups of the '70s possible are alive and well in the '90s. The British still remain in occupation of the Six Counties of Ireland and the machinery which keeps them there is one of force, intimidation and injustice. To wage war in Ireland has required the erosion of normal legal and civil rights. The British government has been found guilty of torture by the European Court of Human Rights. A high-ranking British police officer, John Stalker, was himself framed and removed from office when he pursued evidence that Britain was operating a shoot-to-kill policy in the Six Counties. Juryless courts, British collusion with loyalist death squads, the use of supergrasses to imprison hundreds of people, the Prevention of

Terrorism Act (under which the Guildford Four were arrested) - the Irish people have seen, and continue to suffer, it all.

The fundamental injustice - the denial of the Irish people's right to rule themselves - is the primary cancer from which all these other injustices, including the false imprisonment of the Guildford Four, Maguire Seven and Birmingham Six, spread.

Is it possible to separate this war machine in Ireland from what happened to the Guildford Four? The film *In the Name of the Father* has a very good go at this when it presents Gerard Conlon turning away in disgust from the IRA man in prison after he has been shown, quite fictitiously, setting fire to a prison warder. This was not a cinematic drama but the very political core of a film seeking to isolate one injustice from its roots.

A missed opportunity

Solicitor Alastair Logan has stringent criticisms of the film *In the Name of the Father*. In 1974, he took on the case of Paddy Armstrong, and has represented all of the Guildford Four at one time or another, as well as the Maguire Seven. He has spent the twenty years since in a determined and tireless struggle for justice in these cases.

The opening sequence of the film slams into gear with a high speed chase by British soldiers of Gerard Conlon and his associates because Conlon's antics on the roof from which they are stealing materials have been mistaken by the troops for the actions of a sniper. It is good heart-pounding stuff. But like so much of the film it is pure fiction.

The essential story of the film is that Gerard Conlon, played brilliantly by Daniel Day-Lewis, along with the other three of the Guildford Four were wrongfully convicted and imprisoned for the Guildford bombings. The film seeks to show that this was a monstrous miscarriage of justice. It does this by four major assertions.

Firstly, the assertion that on the night that the bombings occurred Gerard Conlon and his friend Paul Hill were sleeping rough on a park bench which a tramp, Charlie Burke, regarded as his property - so much so that he carved his initials into the wooden seat. The meeting between these three was to provide the alibi for Gerard Conlon (and coincidentally for Paul Hill by inference) for the night of the bombings.

Secondly, that the evidence against Gerard Conlon was manufactured by the police and inserted by them into a blank piece of paper which he had signed after they had used violence, threats and intimidation towards him. Thus it was that his Aunt Annie Maguire was brought into the picture, having been named by Hill and written into Conlon's statement by the police despite his sarcastic rejection of her

alleged involvement as a bombmaker when questioned by the police - 'My Aunt Annie made them and Mother Theresa planted them.'

Thirdly, that his father Guiseppe, hauntingly portrayed by Peter Postlethwaite, was imprisoned with the remainder of the Maguire Seven for assisting in the preparation of the bombs for Guildford and other similar activities after a single trial which had involved all eleven of them.

Fourthly, that this alibi was known to Gerard Conlon (and presumably to Paul Hill) who were never able to find the tramp to prove the alibi and thus their innocence. That Mr Burke could give evidence in support of the alibi was also known to the police who interviewed him about Gerard Conlon's alibi (on a date which, according to the film, preceded the arrest of Mr Conlon by nearly a month) and who concealed this alibi from Mr Conlon and Mr Hill. But for the clever outwitting of the police by Mrs Peirce, Conlon's solicitor, who had obtained a Court Order to force them to allow her access to their records, this would never have come to light. It was her gruelling search that revealed the carved initials on the park bench and her fearless advocacy, despite the combined efforts of the lone judge in the appeal court and the prosecution's barrister, which ultimately exposed the police deceit and concealment of that alibi and thus secured the release of the Guildford Four.

The other story is the relationship between Gerard and Guiseppe Conlon.

They are depicted as sharing a cell from the time of their remand in custody. Initially Gerard rejects his father's pacifist views and opts for violent confrontation. He ultimately comes to share them when the violence personified in the IRA man MacAndrew leads to the immolation of a prison officer.

In the absence of a disclaimer the makers of the film must have realised that the film's audience would regard the essential story as the injustice done to the Guildford Four and the Maguire Seven and in particular Gerard Conlon and that the content would be regarded as fact and the audience will leave the cinema believing that they have seen what actually took place. The reality, however, is that the substantial proportion of the content of this film is fiction. Not only is it fiction but some of it is wholly unnecessary distortion of fact.

It is not as if the film makers did not have available to them accurate factual accounts. They also had available to them the services of Gareth Peirce, who could have advised them as to the true facts. It is therefore not possible for the film makers to retreat into the argument that different people view the facts in different ways and the content of the film is factually true at least from one point of view.

None of the four assertions in the film is true. Hill and Conlon were not together on the night of the Guildford bombings. Hill was in Southampton and Conlon in a Catholic Young Men's hostel in London. Charlie Burke was a respectable young man

who worked as a manager of a greengrocers shop and who also lived in the hostel. He made a statement to the Surrey police in January 1975, six weeks after the arrest of the Guildford Four, which provided Gerard Conlon alone with an alibi. The statement was not served on the Defence as it should have been but it was served by the DPP as part of the Appeal papers in May 1989 without any necessity for an Order compelling them to do so. The statement made by Burke in 1975 had been found by the Avon and Somerset police in 1988 when they were carrying out an inquiry into the case ordered by the Home Secretary. Thus all that was discovered by Mrs Peirce was the note which had originally accompanied the statement stating that it should not be revealed to the Defence, a fact that was already obvious from the fact that it had not been.

Gerard Conlon made two statements both lengthy and both written by himself. He never signed any blank statement. Paul Hill mentioned a woman he named as 'Anne' in an interview that took place on the morning of 3 December 1974. He did not identify that woman. It was Gerard Conlon who told the police that the 'Anne' was his aunt Annie Maguire in an interview which took place in the afternoon of the same day. Police were despatched to the Maguire household and took up observation at 7pm. The Maguire Seven were arrested at 8.45pm. They were charged with a separate charge from the Guildford Four charges, there being no allegation of connection that the Crown could prove, and they were tried separately. In addition to the eleven a large number of other people were arrested but only four made self-incriminating confessions. Those four were the people whose characters and lifestyles were such that they were unable to withstand the violence, the threats and the intimidation which characterised the interviews. Patrick Maguire was only 13 when he was in that police station being slapped around, threat-

name ice

Britain paid for locking up the innocent Guildford Four, Maguire Seven and Birmingham Six. Significant compensation for cases which killed one man and permanently maimed the lives of others. The judges, prosecutors, police officers and politicians directly responsible are barely mentioned. The film 'In the Name of the Father' (the Maguire Seven were not released early) has been used as a page has been turned, the chapter concluded, that things are different now.

The IRA man, in the film called MacAndrew, is shown as one of the men who in fact carried out the bombings for which the Four were imprisoned. His character must be presented as ruthless and fanatical; he must be the 'other' so that the 'innocent' Irish can be the norm caught between two intransigent forces – Britain and the IRA.

The truth is, as always, more subtle and more powerful. Two months after the Guildford Four had been given the longest sentences ever handed out in a British court, an IRA Active Service Unit was captured in Balcombe Street in London. They had carried out a series of bombings which had caused near hysteria in Britain. When questioned they refused all answers except to admit to the bombings for which the Guildford Four had been imprisoned. They made detailed statements about this

to lawyers, which precisely fitted the known facts about the bombings. Knowing that this could bring the whole edifice of lies which had been used to convict the Guildford Four tumbling down, the police, the forensic service and the DPP went to great lengths to prevent these facts coming out. At their trial the Balcombe Street unit recognised the court only to allow one of them, Joe O'Connell, (remember MacAndrew in the film) to make a joint statement declaring the innocence of the Guildford Four (see left). They also appeared as witnesses in the Guildford Four appeal in 1977.

That appeal was unsuccessful largely because the evidence of the Balcombe Street unit was only heard by judges, it was never presented to a jury. No wonder. In the trial of the Balcombe Street men, the jury had been sufficiently impressed by what

it heard to find the men not guilty of 26 of the 100 charges. The police were so furious that officers followed the jury to a pub where some of them were expressing outrage at the lengthy sentences passed on the men, and arrested them.

The Balcombe Street IRA men, at considerable risk to themselves and other IRA personnel, consistently stood up and testified to the innocence of the Guildford Four. The police, judges, DPP, forensic scientists, press and politicians, in contrast, lied to keep the Four in prison. The Balcombe Street men remain prisoners. The men who framed the Four rose to the highest levels of public life. The film, in ignoring this reality and slandering those who have fought against the very basis of British injustice in Ireland, helps to perpetuate that injustice.

Maxine Williams

ened and intimidated and told his mother was a murderess, and he did not make a statement confessing to something he had not done.

The court scenes depicted in the film were fictional. The Guildford Four and the Maguire Seven were not tried together. A solicitor has no right of audience before the Court of Appeal. The evidence which secured the release of the Guildford Four was found by the Avon and Somerset police in the files of the Surrey police. That evidence demonstrated to the satisfaction of



Alastair Logan

the Court of Appeal that the Surrey police must have lied about the interviews of Patrick Armstrong and Paul Hill and had concocted false custody records to support what they alleged about the interviews of all of the Four. Since the Four had always stated that they were forced to make false self-incriminating statements because of the violence, threats and intimidation of the police, the credibility of the police in denying that any violence was used was essential to maintain the convictions. Once it had been so convincingly destroyed, there being no other evidence against the Four, the convictions had to be quashed.

Some of the events depicted in the film are completely unnecessary deviations from the truth. The assertion that Charlie

Burke was an elderly tramp when in fact he was a respectable young man is justified by the producers, who say that they had become fed up with doing interior shots and wanted to do an exterior one. So much for integrity! Likewise the assertion that the freeing of the Guildford Four came as a result of the production of the concealed Conlon alibi statement. Even detail not essential to the story is hopelessly wrong. The Conlons, as Category A prisoners, never shared a cell with anyone let alone with each other. They were rarely in the same prison. No prison officer was burned to death. And can you imagine a high security prison housing highly dangerous prisoners giving them metal knives and forks to eat with?

The evidence of police perjury and fabrication which secured the quashing of the convictions of the Guildford Four would have been substantially added to if the Defence had been able to present their cases on behalf of the Four. There were, for example, new witnesses as to the alibis for Paul Hill, Carole Richardson and Gerard Conlon. There was the concealment of the Conlon alibi statements and there was the evidence of doctors that Carole Richardson was under the influence of drugs at the time that she made her false confession.

The evidence which secured the quashing of the convictions of the Maguire Seven was discovered during and after Sir John May's Inquiry and demonstrated that the scientific evidence upon which they were convicted was completely unreliable and could not exclude innocent contamination. In fact the unique pattern of test results in their case was only explicable by the laboratory either used in the tests being contaminated with nitroglycerine, as was shown by experiments conducted by scientists instructed by the Maguire and Conlon families.

The film ignored the very important fact that the whole of the prosecution in the Guildford Four case was a giant fraud in

which there was, apart from the matters uncovered and laid before the Court of Appeal in 1989, extensive concealment of the evidence which demonstrated that the Balcombe Street ASU of the IRA had carried out the bombings. The role of the Metropolitan Police and the prosecuting authorities in this, the actions and attitudes of the judiciary and the failure to prosecute those



The RCG organised many demonstrations and campaigns to free all Irish prisoners

against whom there was solid forensic evidence, as well as detailed, freely-made confessions, are not even mentioned in the film.

The co-producers of the film reject criticisms of the factual inaccuracies in the film by suggesting that this will give succour and comfort to those who still seek to say that the Guildford Four and the Maguire Seven were guilty of the offences they were charged with in 1974. The truth of the matter is that a factually inaccurate film which does not 'come clean' about its inaccuracies and poses as a dramatic documentary will be used by those in the police service, on the Bench, in the Temple and in parliament who still whisper that the Guildford Four

The death of Giuseppe Conlon

In *In the Name of the Father* Giuseppe Conlon dies in gaol, broken but dignified, of TB contracted while working at Harland and Woolf, compounded by the frustration and despair of his wrongful conviction. But there is nothing of the medical neglect, the physical torture Giuseppe endured, nothing to reproach the prison system for...

Conlon entered prison a sick man. On remand and in Wormwood Scrubs after sentence he was not badly treated; he was prescribed the correct medicines and a dietary supplement of Complian, malt and milk. Doctors ensured he had warm clothes and did work which was not too arduous.

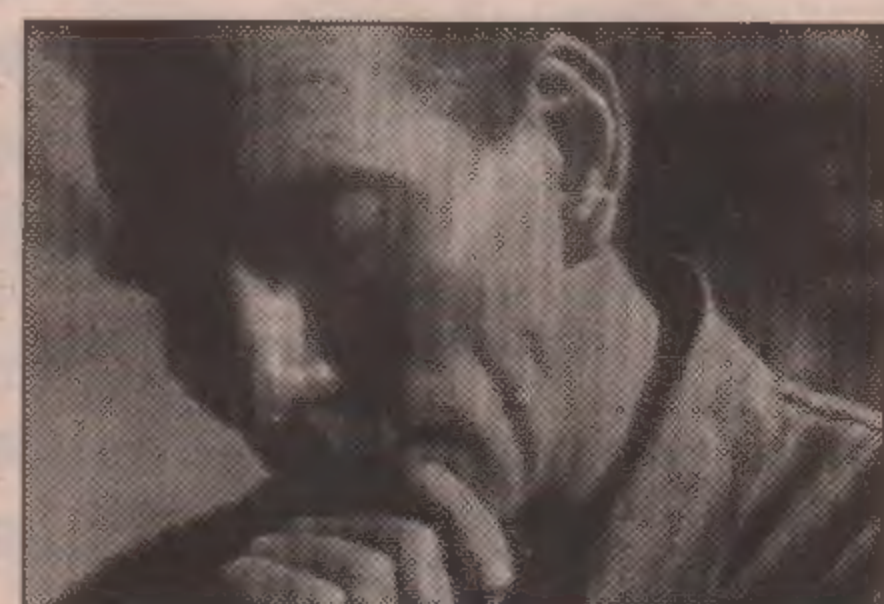
In 1977 Giuseppe was moved to Wakefield and the solicitude vanished. When Gerry Conlon arrived at Wakefield he did not recognise his father, so dramatic was the change.

F wing, Wakefield, where Irish prisoners were held, had previously been a series of Special Control Units. In 1975, after a public outcry, they were 'closed', meaning the behaviour modification regime was discontinued while the use of the actual sensory deprivation cells continued.

Giuseppe's dietary supplements were stopped and within three months he lost two stone. He began to suffer from leg and chest pains and mild paralysis. On one occasion he could not move from bed for three days. Fellow prisoners desperately attempted to get a medical officer to see him; none would come.

Conlon asked to see the Board of Visitors about the refusal of the principal medical officer to even see him. He was denied access on the grounds he was 'improperly dressed' in blue instead of grey prison uniform.

Giuseppe refused to work making tents because of the dust and was moved to another 'miscellaneous' workshop where he was ordered to paint. Again he refused, because of the fumes. Consequently he was moved to a cold segregation cell without mattress or bedding. By this time he was regularly coughing up blood. The only



Actor Peter Postlethwaite as Giuseppe Conlon

medication he was given was the cough medicine Benlyn, completely ineffectual against his condition.

After a year in Wakefield, Giuseppe was moved back to the Scrubs. His health never recovered and was made still worse by the punitive regime imposed on all prisoners after the 'MUFTI riot' in August 1979.

Giuseppe was moved to Hammersmith Hospital on 31 December and died there on 23 January 1980. Two weeks before his death a rumour that the IRA were planning to 'spring him' saw the dying Giuseppe taken off a saline drip and oxygen and bundled back to the Scrubs in a taxi while the Home Office and the prison governor deliberated about what to do with him.

After Giuseppe's death, British Airways workers refused to transport his body to Belfast. The Ministry of Defence agreed to ship it from Brize Norton but on arrival the RAF too refused. Finally his body was flown Aer Lingus to Dublin, leaving the Conlon family to solve the expensive problem of transport to Belfast.

Nicki Jameson

Source: *Frightened for my life - An account of deaths in British prisons* by Geoff Coggan and Martin Walker. Fontana 1982.

plete incomprehension of the importance of truth and principles to those who had little else to cling to in the long dark years of unjust imprisonment. And are not they, just like the victims of the bombings and their families, also entitled to the truth?

Far from exorcism, the film engaged in fantasy and exculpation – for the other allegation which could be levelled at the film is that it is cleaning up some images and that some of those really responsible for these miscarriages are conveniently omitted. Why did the film need to misrepresent the facts? Why was it necessary to tell lies to justify a truth? The real facts are compelling and powerful.

Essentially the way the film treats the facts of the cases poses three questions. Firstly, if you choose to depict real people who took part in real events are you obligated to depict those events with factual accuracy? Is artistic licence permissible when you purport to deal with events that actually happened and, if so, how far are you entitled to depart from the truth? Secondly, if 'faction' is permissible in a case where real events are being depicted, should the film's audience be told what is the fictional content of the film? Thirdly, what explanation do you owe your audience, if any, in the event that you depart from the truth?

In my view the film is a missed opportunity to explain and dignify the struggle of the eleven ordinary people who found themselves in a Kafkaesque nightmare where truth was turned on its head and all semblance of reality was replaced by ghastly lies and distortions. They were faced by blind prejudice and the massed forces of the State and, as a result, justice was perverted, families were torn apart and in some cases destroyed, and children orphaned and imprisoned. If the film had depicted the stories of the two mothers, Sarah Conlon and Anne Maguire, it would have been able to tell truthfully and at the same time the story of both the Maguire Seven and the Guildford Four – a story of human love and endurance beyond our experience.

Traven's style of writing is simple and direct but never banal. Where cruelty and violence occur nothing is spared, though the writer's love of humanity and conviction that it can overcome all obstacles always shines through. The beauty of the Chiapas is brought home to the reader of the 'Jungle Novels' as Traven evokes its sights, sounds and smells.

The causes of the revolution are an important aspect of all the 'Jungle Novels', but especially the first book, *Government*, where Traven explains the oppressive nature of capitalism and the particularly brutal form it took in early twentieth century Mexico. It is in *Government* that the shady character of Don Gabriel first appears as a government official. Though not well paid, government officials often amassed considerable fortunes through various rackets, especially the imposition and enforcement of phoney taxation. These rackets exploited poor people, usually Indians whose livelihood came from subsistence farming and craft-work. Alcohol was also a very profitable basis for exploitation by officials because it not only made money, but created social problems which made people easier to control.

People were able to provide for their basic needs through their traditional means; but the fines, fees and taxes that emanated from the rackets were impossible to pay. The solution to this problem was simple: Indians who were heavily in debt could be provided as cheap labour for large ranches or the mahogany-rich forests (*monterias*) where they would work to pay off their debts. Go-betweens were often required to process these debtors (the peons) from their initial creditors to their new employers, and it is to this position that Don Gabriel graduates, reappearing throughout the books. Once indebted to their new employers, the peons invariably remained debtors for the rest of their lives. Not only did they have to pay their original debts, but they also had to pay the 'Don Gabriels', as well as their own living expenses. This system of peonage was the foundation of Mexico's economy for many years. The conditions under which peons had to labour were akin to slavery and death through maltreatment or dangerous work practices were very commonplace. The most overtly revolutionary of the 'Jungle Novels', *The Rebellion of the Hanged*, takes its name from a method of torture whereby peons on a *monteria* were strung up for long periods of time by their limbs if they failed to cut their minimum quota of mahogany. 'But,' says Traven, 'it did not matter whether there was an Indian more or less in Mexico, or anywhere else on the American continent - they increased fast enough ... but it did matter, and mattered more than anything else, that the foreign companies who exploited the wealth of the country should have enough labour' (*The Carreta*).

Traven often likens the working conditions of the peons and the way they are regarded by their employers to that of beasts of burden. Peons must labour to the satisfaction of their bosses. The church plays a very important role in instilling absolute submission: 'disobedience to him whom God had made his master might end in disobedience to God and the Holy Father ... that had to be got into the blood at the very beginning' (*The Carreta*).

But the peons don't go on obeying forever. They do rise up against their oppressors. One of the main forces behind their rebellion is traditional Indian culture. Social structures in Indian communities incorporated aspects of democracy and socialism. The Indians were always told that they were incapable of government,

The Rebellion of the Hanged

The reverberations of New Year's Chiapas uprising in Mexico, led by the Zapatista

National Liberation Army, are being felt across the country. On 2 March after lengthy

negotiations with the Zapatistas, the government promised to introduce long-needed reforms on

land, health, welfare, education and much else. Rather than wait for these promises to materialise, peasants are now seizing land throughout the country. An Indian peasant said of the uprising, 'They have opened the door for all of us. The government has to take us into account and can no longer repress us.' On the heels of the uprising has come the assassination on 24 March of the ruling party's candidate in Mexico's forthcoming elections. International capital, particularly in the USA, is gripped with anxiety at the growing instability of Mexico.

Clearly the world has not heard the last of the Zapatistas. For those wishing to understand the historical, social and political background to the Zapatista rebellion, FRANCIS SQUIRE argues that a good beginning can be made with the writings of B Traven (author of *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*) whose six 'Jungle Novels' chronicle the plight of the Chiapas Indians and their revolt during the 1911 Mexican revolution. Indeed British press comments on the Chiapas uprising made references to Traven's novels, remarking on how little conditions have changed.

VIVA EL EJERCITO ZAPATISTA



Zapatista fighters in Chiapas

yet prior to European invasion they had managed their own affairs successfully for centuries. Many were not taken in by laws and ideologies that asserted that Indians needed white people to rule them. A widely held view was that 'in fact, every tenth man is capable of governing. There is nothing mysterious about it. It is much more difficult to construct a machine that will work than to rule a people where the machinery is already there and in working order. The art of governing is only made out to be mysterious in order to frighten revolutionaries and to prevent the simple subject from knowing how little capacity and knowledge is needed for government' (*Government*).

In *The Rebellion of the Hanged*, talk of revolution comes to a head after the attempted escape of two peons from a *monteria*. 'No purpose would be served if I were to save only myself or you yourself,' says an Indian called Celso to Martin Trinidad, a former teacher who volunteered his services on the *monteria* while on the run from imprisonment for political activity. 'Only a complete, well directed operation will do. One man by himself can't change anything.' Celso and Trinidad proceed to organise the peons, together with Andres, an oxdriver who was the principal character in *The Carreta*, and Modesta, the victim of attempted rape by a ranch owner. The plan is to depose the bosses and destroy all documents relating to births, marriages, purchases, sales etc to prevent any future claims to property or

political rule that would impede revolutionary progress. 'Land and liberty' is the slogan of the revolution. 'The peons should be free,' says Martin Trinidad, 'all of them, if we don't start by ridding ourselves of fin-

gueros (ranch owners), police, political chiefs and municipal bosses we'll never have liberty... if we don't exterminate them, they'll soon put us in chains again. And this time they'll have forged them heavier than those we now carry.'

Battles are won and after the peons have gained control of the *monteria*, some decide to opt out of revolutionary activity. The revolutionaries warn of the dangers of leaving any part of the existing system intact: 'If you want to make a revolution, you must carry it through to the end, because otherwise it will tear you to threads.'

Following initial successes, the revolutionaries find a new sense of purpose and grow in self-confidence. Lively and frank discussion takes place, 'but,' says the author, 'the discussion was nothing like the lamentable deliberations of those men who, in nearly all revolutions, speak out and orate endlessly - speak, when they should be taking action ... and it is these windbags of revolution who end by ruining it.' The problems of revolution are all faced by the peons,

but they are determined, confident, optimistic and well-organised. As Martin Trinidad says 'If we want land and liberty, not only must we arrive at the right moment but we must arrive together. If we don't we'll be exterminated ... the strongest lion is helpless in the face of ten thousand ants who can force him to abandon his prey.'

The elusive writer of these books was an anarchist who was unfortunately often scornful of communism. When asked for biographical details he wrote: 'I would like to state very clearly: the biography of a creative person is absolutely unimportant ... The creative person ... should have no other biography than his works.'

Traven was born Otto Wienecke to working class parents in 1882. He ran away from home and during the course of his life used up to 28 aliases. He joined the short-lived Munich revolution, then came to England where he spent time in Brixton prison as an illegal immigrant. He then travelled to Mexico where he got to know and to love the people of Chiapas. The product was the 'Jungle Novels'. Traven's knowledge of revolution came both from experience and study. The lessons he learnt from Munich are apparent in the 'Jungle Novels'. Traven never idealises revolution, but advocates it as the only way the oppressed can truly win their freedom.

The impoverishment of the Mexican working class

The authors of *For Richer, For Poorer - Shaping US-Mexican Integration* have produced a powerful critique of neo-liberalism: a study of new colonialism in action. In contrast to the alleged failure of state-supported or planned economic development, neo-liberalism with its platform of de-regulation, privatisation and free trade is often held up as an alternative route to prosperity, democracy and social welfare.

A detailed study of Mexico demonstrates the opposite. In the era of neo-liberalism, GDP in Mexico grew only 1.3 per cent in 1989, 2.4 per cent in 1990, 1.5 per cent in 1991 and 0.4 per cent in 1992. These are hardly rates of development capable of resolving even a single one of Mexico's massive socio-economic problems. Besides meagre economic growth, the conditions of the vast majority of 80 million Mexicans have deteriorated over the same period. Between 1981 and 1992 real wages dropped by as much as 40 per cent and un- or under-employment increased rapidly. Workers' share of aggregate personal income dropped from 36 per cent in the mid 1970s to 23 per cent in 1992.

Neo-liberalism has overwhelmingly benefited US capital and a small stratum of dependent and parasitic Mexican capitalists. The elimination of state controls and state regulation has resulted in hundreds of US firms moving south of the border. Cheap labour - an average \$60 for a 45 hour week - the absence of environmental controls and a government ready to repress workers' organisation has led to a massive expansion of US-controlled industry in Mexico. In 1982 there were 585 assembly plants south of the border employing approximately 110,000 workers at an average \$2.41 an hour. In 1993 the figure was 2,160, employing 500,000 workers at an hourly rate of \$1.64 per day!

The book concludes with a discussion of certain programmatic positions necessary in building grass roots, working class, community opposition to international capital. In the current period, in the absence of powerful international working class movements such a discussion is bound to be tentative and difficult. Nevertheless a critique which correctly calls for democratic procedures which can take into account

the needs of labour, which calls for institutions which can be accountable to communities, which calls for financial assistance to Third World countries, has to deal with the political practicalities of enforcing these under the present capitalist/imperialist system.

Can such an economic system controlled by a tiny group of multinationals be forced into legislating laws and conventions, universal standards and practices which are conducive to welfare rather than profit? Can capital's political representatives who control the state be forced to do anything progressive without mass movements or social revolution? What is the relationship between local grass roots movements, local community initiatives and a national and international movement capable of challenging a global imperialist capitalist system? The weakness of this book is that it does not deal adequately with such questions. It is nevertheless highly recommended.

Eddie Abrahams

For Richer, For Poorer - shaping US-Mexican integration by Harry Browne et al, Latin American Bureau, 136pp, 1994, £7.99



Neo-liberalism – the final manifestation of capitalism

Capitalism at the height of its economic, political and military power offers humanity nothing. Neo-liberalism (deregulation, privatisation and open markets), far from being a triumphant resurgent capitalism, will be its final manifestation, as the capitalist system is devoured by its own inherent contradictions. These were the central themes of an important speech given by Fidel Castro to the 4th Latin American and Caribbean Meeting in Havana on 28 January 1994. Below DAVID REED summarises, with edited extracts, Fidel Castro's critique of neo-liberalism, capitalism and imperialism.*



Poverty stricken Haitians

Fidel Castro began the main part of his speech by summarising, from the discussions throughout the meeting, the commonly agreed consequences of neo-liberalism, 'this new manifestation of imperialism', in Latin America and the Caribbean. 'You see it every day, at all hours, in the growing unemployment, the increasing poverty, the lack of resources for education, ... health care, the lack of resources to address social problems, ... housing, ... marginal neighbourhoods in all our countries' cities.'

It is experienced with privatisation and the sale to private interests at miserable prices of often strategic industries that took a long time to become national industries. Large and important firms, even part of the nations' capital stock, have been sold to foreign capital, after being valued at prices perhaps half or a third of their worth, sometimes to reduce the foreign debt that 'we called uncollectable and unpayable.' In fact the debt is now being paid in two different ways: 'they are gaining more control than ever over the fundamental branches of our countries' economies, and they are charging us more than ever for the debt.'

Teachers, doctors, representatives of the cultural sectors, unions, farmers or students say there are no resources. Yet the percentage of each Latin American country's national budget that goes to paying the foreign debt is enormous, in some cases over 50 per cent of the national budget. While there is no budget for essential services for the population to solve any of its problems. This is what Latin American people are being taught about neo-liberalism – not from any textbook, but from 'the school of life, ... the school of reality.' This is 'what neo-liberalism really is when it is combined with the new world currents, with the unipolar hegemony of the United States and the creation of large economic and political power blocs.' (p3)

Castro points out that it is not just Cuba which, as a result of very particular circumstances – the collapse of the socialist bloc and the tightening of the US blockade – is experiencing a special period, but also Latin America, the ex-socialist countries and the Third World. Except for 'the super-privileged minorities that flaunt their power', the whole world is experiencing a special period. Even in the developed capitalist countries like the US, sectors of the population of Hispanic origin are having a very hard time and the black population could be called, 'the Third World within the United States'. (p4)

Latin America and neo-liberalism

Castro sees the impact of neo-liberalism as analogous to reconquest. Latin Americans are being conquered all over again and their future promises to be as terrible as the future once reserved for indigenous peoples. 'Whereas before they were exterminated by disease, exploitation and the fiercest repression, we could say

that they are now trying to starve (us) to death and if we don't fight and we don't defend ourselves, they will starve us to death in the end.'

Castro believes that the situation for Latin America is more difficult than any previous time in its history. At the time of the Cuban Revolution Latin America's debt was hardly anything; today it owes almost \$500 billion. Basic export products had a certain value on the world market but with the order imposed by imperialism these products have less purchasing power every year. Many of the products are being replaced by synthetic products as a result of technological advances in the developed capitalist countries. For example, cane sugar is being replaced in the United States, which previously imported large quantities of sugar, by isoglucose extracted from corn which has a higher sweetening power than cane sugar. The same has happened and will continue to happen with many more products. 'Basic products on which the economy, life and development of many Third World countries depend are being edged out of the market.' Imperialism has destroyed 'virtually all international agreements for basic products.' (p4)

Latin America's major agricultural exports are not only losing purchasing power but also face agricultural subsidies in the developed capitalist countries which make the latter's products more competitive to 'the detriment of our economic interests.'

As for manufacturing goods, there was a time when they were protected in one way or another. Now the imperialist countries have a monopoly on advanced technology and scientific research, and on the possibility of automatising production. It is very difficult for a Third World country to industrialise to be able to compete with many of the products

of the developed capitalist world. 'Third World countries are left with the hope, perhaps, that polluting industries will be transferred to them or industries which need a great deal of manual labour, a great deal of cheap labour ...' (p4)

Economic globalisation, the opening up of economic frontiers and elimination of tariff barriers will put the Third World at the mercy of the transnationals and imperialism. 'They would buy up everything, they would be the owners of the major industries, they would make us into even more of a colony than we are today.'

'They invade our culture pitilessly, they invade us through their mass media, they make us see not what we are interested in seeing but what they want us to see, among other reasons to overwhelm us with their wealth and their consumer societies based on advertising, based on propaganda.'

Fidel Castro summarises these points by arguing that the nominal independence that the Third world has left is 'being snatched away bit by bit'. Such words as independence 'are out of date in the new world order's vocabulary.' (p4)

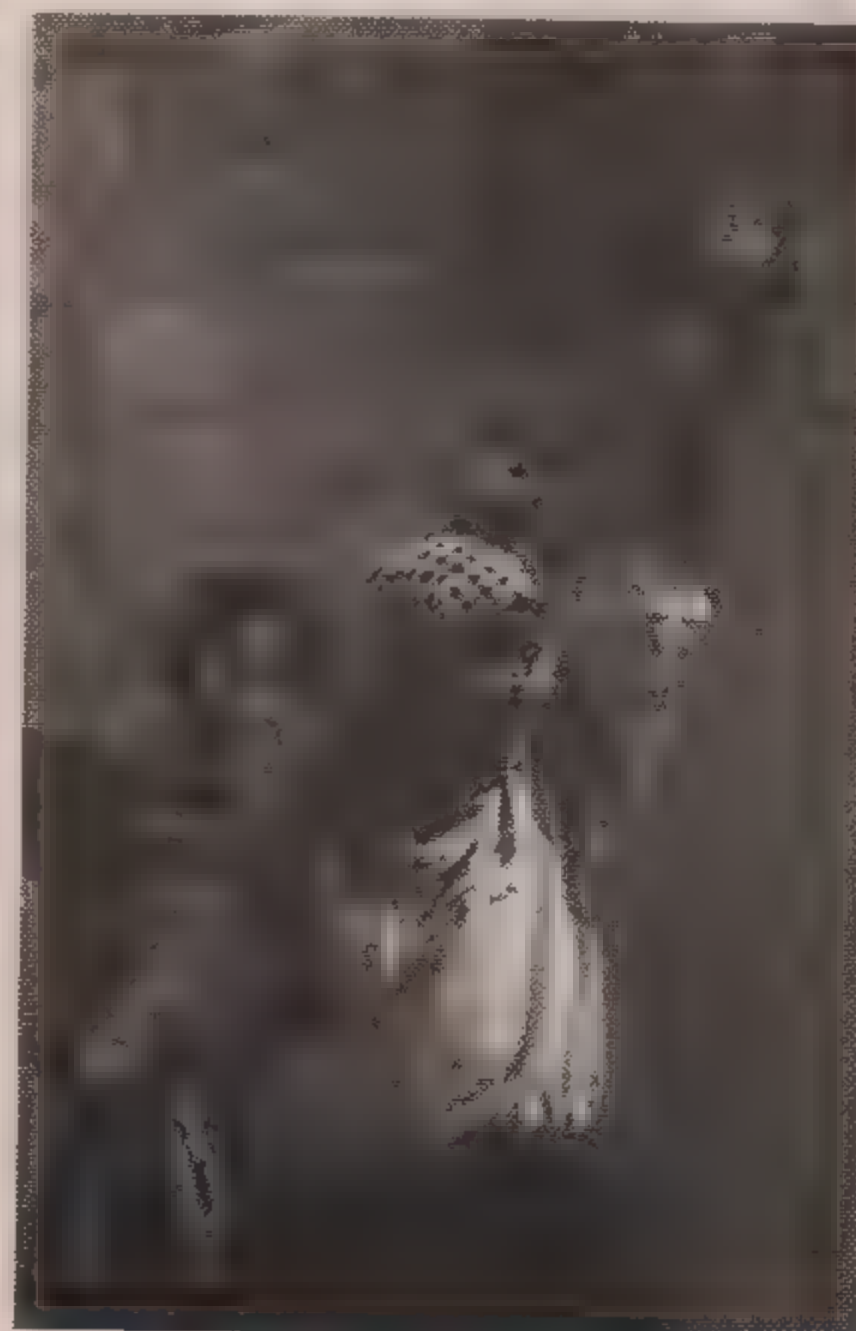
Neo-liberalism, the final manifestation of capitalism and imperialism

Castro then returns to one of the central political themes of classical Marxism when he argues that capitalism is recreating globally the economic and political conditions for its own destruction.

The disastrous consequences of neo-liberalism's policies are being experienced everywhere. Of particular significance is the impact on the former socialist countries. Europe's former socialist countries are a 'veritable disaster'. Their peoples are now

realising that 'the rushed and unbalanced implementation of the International Monetary Fund's...and neo-liberalism's formulas was a huge mistake. It was a mistake to put them into practice in such a brutal manner in countries whose economies were designed for another social system ...' (p5)

'It's really painful, amazing, how the death rates in those countries



Political awareness turned into political action

have gone up where before at least everybody had a school ... a hospital and more or less efficient services ... Everyone had a job, they really weren't familiar with unemployment. They were more or less efficient economies, we could say inefficient in many cases, although not everything was inefficient because we know only too well of their great achievements in the field of science, in the development sphere, huge achievements.'

Today, says Castro, even the imperialists are frightened by the consequences resulting from the absurd implementation of the neo-liberal schemes in the former socialist countries. Their economies have practically been destroyed and no one knows how to get them out of the resulting crisis. Their populations are in despair because of the situation they are experiencing. So the disastrous effects of neo-liberalism are not just a Latin American experience.

Capitalism and neo-liberalism can offer humanity nothing

'Neo-liberalism is the final manifestation of capitalism and imperialism. To be anti-neoliberal is to be anti-imperialist. One could add that to be anti-neoliberal is to be anti-capitalist, although many people aren't aware of that. But it's that this hatred is hatred towards the manifestation of capitalism's evolution and development. We are faced with an awful situation and with a system that is currently at the zenith of its power and of its political, economic and military might and which can offer humanity nothing.'

'Capitalism is destined to devour itself. First it created colonialism, and colonialism created the underdevelopment by virtue of which 80 per cent of humanity, more than four billion people, live today in a state of poverty. Although in many countries there are rich, very rich people. Nevertheless, four-fifths of humanity belong to this underdeveloped world, that is, to this Third World.'

Very serious problems and tremendous contradictions arise from the fact that capitalism is obliged to grow incessantly. 'If growth stops, it means a catastrophe for the United States, for Japan, for Europe. Factories close, production and service industries go bankrupt, banks go bust, insurance companies go bust, the system goes bust when development is checked. A system which is obliged to develop continuously is, in present circumstances, a disaster for the world.' (p5)

Castro develops this theme. Growth above certain limits is absurd. 'Look at what they are doing ... in the world when there is more hunger and poverty than ever before. How did they solve the problems between Europe and the United States over agricultural questions? They agreed to slaughter millions of cows in Europe ... Slaughtering millions of cows when there are hundreds of millions of children who don't have milk to drink is a crime ... Before they subsidised output, now they are going to subsidise land that lies fallow. Subsidies for not using land with all the misery we have been talking about, with all the disasters that we know of, is a terrible crime.'

There are perhaps even more serious problems. For Nature is being destroyed to sustain the high growth rate to support the very high standard of living in the imperialist countries – although there is great inequality in its distribution. 'The atmosphere, the seas, the rivers and the lakes and underground water supplies are being poisoned.' The anarchic, chaotic disorderly development of capitalism – the only possible kind – is 'putting the conditions needed for humanity to survive at risk.' (p5)

Confronted by such a prospect and after the disaster in the socialist bloc, many people have become disheartened. Fidel Castro, however, sees hope in the growing awareness of people of the destructive and genocidal character of neo-liberalism. 'We can see around us many signs of hope, of struggle.' It will be a hard job fine-tuning this unipolar world. 'It's going to become impossible for imperialism and neo-liberalism to govern because there's a tremendous weapon which is the awareness of the peoples, especially when that awareness leads the peoples into action.' (p6)

* *Granma Internacional* 16 February 1994 pp3-7.

The main stories tonight

A study of state control through the news media

Every day we are bombarded with news: from the TV, papers, radio. The information we receive in this way helps shape our understanding of the world. But the news information we receive is not neutral: much depends on what is included, what is excluded, how it is presented, who tells us what and how much we are led to believe in their authority. WILLIAM HIGHAM examines these mechanisms of control.

Those whose views are upheld by the media have a strong hold over the majority of the people. In a bourgeois democracy like our own, where the State cannot be seen to be habitually dictating to its people, or routinely using excessive force to impose its will, this is one of the most important weapons the State has for maintaining control. The State's active use of the media (or other establishment communicators like the Church and schools) to influence prevailing attitudes and 'common sense' is what Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci described as 'hegemony'.

The news media are the State's most effective weapons of propaganda, but it is mainly at moments of crisis (eg during the Malvinas War) that the State and/or Capital exercise overt control over them. This does not negate their effectiveness however: in fact, it increases it. The news media's supposed independence allows them a dominance over 'common sense' that they would not achieve if they were seen to be under State control.

And individual journalists' political leanings do not matter: so the solution is not simply finding more socially committed journalists. The culture and practices of journalism, set within the economic and political interests of what are often giant multi-national news organisations, tend towards news reports that emphasise the State and Capital's point of view.

As Todd Gitlin says (in *The Whole World is Watching* – a study of media reaction to the New Left in America), the problem lies in the very structure of the news gathering media. In 'the ways journalists are socialised from childhood and then trained, recruited, assigned, edited, rewarded and promoted on the job; they decisively shape the way in which news is defined, events are considered newsworthy and "objectivity" is secured. News is managed routinely, automatically, as reporters import definitions of newsworthiness from editors and institutional beats, as they accept the analytical frameworks of officials even while taking up adversarial positions. Simply by doing their jobs, journalists tend to serve the political and economic elite's definitions of reality. (News stories end up) confirming the rightness and necessity of the core hegemonic principles.'

It is not just news 'culture' that affects the way events are distorted: news practices too have an important influence.

In order to fit into the news format, a journalist will adopt a certain frame or angle on an event: news 'frames' are an easy way for journalists to shape a number of facts into a manageable 'story' that fits neatly into the media's conception of the world. Once the frame has been chosen, the reporter does not want to confront or complicate it by adding other more complex material, and s/he will reject or play down material that doesn't fit in with it. Journalists consider their reports unbiased, but by its very nature the technique of framing allows only one interpretation:

an interpretation made using techniques that invariably favour the hegemonic order or State view.

One of the key ways in which words are given meaning in the West is through news reports: by talking of the 'facts' of a story as if any story can be relayed neutrally and without an 'angle', such reports affirm sole meanings and values for words and phrases. The decision to use the term 'terrorist' instead of 'freedom fighter', for instance, clearly shows bias within a report, implying a hostile attitude towards a person who is threatening 'our' status quo. But reporters use such words as if there were no other interpretation, creating an acceptance amongst viewers/readers (who believe that what is on the news must be free from bias) that there actually is no other interpretation.

The very format of TV news too has an effect upon the interpretation of an event: its short reports and its producers' and reporters' assumptions that their audience is impatient and ill-informed leads to stereotyping and simplification. Each event is

News is invariably based on the style of crime reporting: sensationalist headlines, melodramatic language and the concept that 'news' only occurs when two opposing sides clash. Demonstrations are deemed newsworthy or not depending on the scale of violence

reported in such a way that it fits neatly into convenient news categories. And although in order to appear neutral there must be some stories that assume a gently irreverent face, these are never allowed to go outside the basic frames of reference, acceptable to the news media: no alternative to the present state mechanism could even be considered, and any dissent which does not go through official channels is condemned.

The daily headlines, budgetary limits etc, imposed upon news reports also mean that there is rarely time to give any background to a story: why these workers are striking or those students are demonstrating. This means that the reader/viewer is led to believe that such actions are senseless. It is notable particularly in reports on the actions of 'terrorists', eg the IRA: by giving no indication of why they are fighting, the news media portray the IRA as senseless killers.

These days, no news organisation can operate outside 'market forces', so a culture of competitiveness also exists. Thus, once one news team has defined an incident as news, any other news team is expected to look for their own angle on that story. And if a journalist's report differs too much from the initial report – or,

more importantly, from the press agencies' or official account – he is likely to be reprimanded by his editor.

General media conventions can also influence the way a story is reported: the events that get reported are those which can be interpreted in a dramatic way – and which are made by individuals who, for whatever reason, are newsworthy or 'of interest' to the reader/viewer (particularly those who are already known to them). And if such an individual is not available or appropriate, then a relevant 'authority' will be drafted in: someone who represents a 'valid' or 'respected' institution. Thus the closest any oppositional force gets to a voice are the trade union or community relations leaders who, by the very nature of their jobs, are bound to favour the status quo.

News is invariably based on the style of crime reporting: sensationalist headlines, melodramatic language and the concept that 'news' only occurs when two opposing sides clash. Demonstrations are deemed newsworthy or not depending on the scale of violence (especially against the police but also against counter-demonstrators) and the number of arrests (which in effect assigns news-making power to the police).

In non-crime news, the 'two sides' angle is still used: the most common sides being 'Us v Them', with 'Us' being the State and 'Them' being anyone who dares to question the State. In coverage of strikes (as noted by John Downing in *The Media Machine*), reports always imply that 'there is a "national social interest" overriding sectional disputes or class interests. We then see it used to accuse workers ... of deliberately refusing to act for the welfare of their fellow citizens. Thus the workers [in a dispute] are isolated as deviants, localised as a small group contemptuous of others' rights.'

Reports on the nurses' dispute, for instance, laid a great emphasis on how thoughtless 'they' – the nurses – were about the effects their actions were having on 'us' – the patients. And again, during reports on the mortar bombing of Heathrow, the dominant frame was the inconvenience 'they' – the IRA – have caused for 'us' – the innocent travellers and 'holidaymakers'.

The god the media worship is the god of 'peace', stability and the status quo. The ultimate aim, reports suggest, is a peace settlement. Whether it is in South Africa, or the Timex plant, Palestine or Tower Hamlets, those who seek a 'peaceful settlement' (which is a euphemism for the surrender of the oppressed) are praised; those who fight on are condemned. In South Africa, for instance, it is taken for granted that the forthcoming elections are the only possible path to democracy and should be the sole aim of the liberation struggle.

Another way in which the process of journalism affects the distortion of the facts in a report is the value attached to a 'good story': where events are exaggerated or 'sensationalised' in order to create a 'good read' or 'exciting report'. Sensationalising events, if used in the right context, can of course not only create an excit-



The miners' strike 1984/85: at Orgreave the police attacked the pickets; the media reversed the sequence of events to portray 'violence' by striking miners.

ing report, it all too frequently distorts the truth of those events in such a way as benefits the State view.

Newspapers frequently use misleading headlines or captions. *The Independent* described the murder of the Gibraltar Three as a 'shoot-out' when in fact one side was unarmed. During the 1984/85 miners' strike six different papers captioned a photo of striking miner Frank Branwell on his way to stand on a picket line as Frank Branwell 'returning to work'.

Other examples of sensationalism include framing questions in such a way as to force the interviewee to support the boundaries of the frame. For instance, the use of the question 'do you plan to cause trouble?' even if answered in the negative, can allow the reporter to write 'X said that he did not plan to cause trouble' – reinforcing the image of violence and substantiating the use of a 'violence' frame.

And the news media are not above lying if it supports their cause. The BBC for instance have admitted that they reversed film of the battle between police and miners at Orgreave during the miners' strike, showing police charging on horseback apparently in response to miners throwing missiles at them. In reality it was the other way round. But the damage has been done: for millions of people the Battle of Orgreave was started by the miners.

The environment within which someone is interviewed also has an effect on how they are received by the viewer. Workers on strike are invariably interviewed outside factory gates, being jostled, often in poor weather conditions, with a moving hand-held camera, appearing weak before the camera. Compare this to an interview with that factory's managing director, sitting comfortably in an opulent boardroom, relaxed, neatly framed, filmed by a camera held steady on a tripod: the image of strength and, importantly, authority. One could say that these are the 'natural' environments of such people, but when an environment has such

an effect on the reader/viewer, filming them in their 'natural environment' actually gives an effective bias to the report.

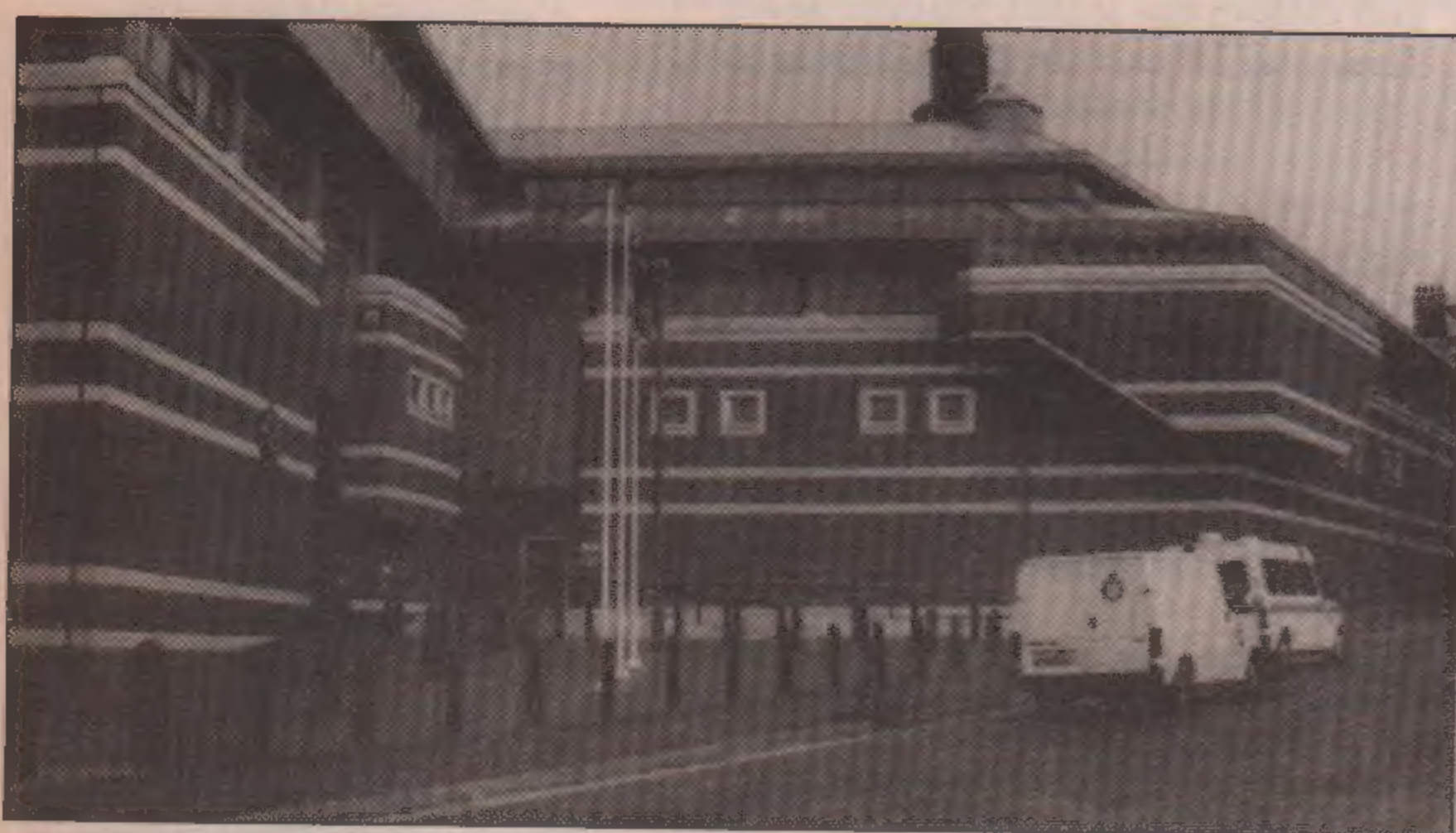
There is also the concept of prediction: the assumption (with little evidence) that, unless 'something is done', what happened this time would inevitably happen again. This is an easy frame for a journalist to use; and (fortunately for, say, publishers involved in circulation wars) offers the opportunity for follow-up stories. This technique has been used to great effect in reports on 'joy-riding' and the James Bulger case, both of which not only allowed the papers to publish reader-gaining follow-up features, but also created an environment more open to repressive measures against working class youth.

This technique can be used even if predictions are unfulfilled: by reporting non-events. For instance, news reports leading up to a major demonstration will often bury the causes and purpose of that demonstration under a frame that deals almost exclusively with whether it will spark off violence. If on the day there is actually no violence, this will be put down to the 'admirable' restraining influence of the moderate forces within the demonstration and/or the 'sterling' efforts of the 'much put-upon' police.

These are just some of the ways in which the State view is upheld by the news media. It is not the political bias of individual journalists that allow such views to be upheld: it is the very nature of the Western news reporting process itself.

By its widespread influence and by its very culture, built up over years of 'distanced' State influence, the news media uphold the State and negate the influence of any potential threat to it. By stressing the authority of State institutions and condemning any attempt to look outside those institutions for change, they deny any non-parliamentary, non-constitutional opposition not only a voice, but any potentially responsive audience.

Strangeways – the new and the old



The new ...

Four years after the biggest uprising in the history of the British prison system, the new Strangeways has begun to take in prisoners.

As part of the drive towards privatisation of the prison system, Strangeways was 'market tested', put out to tender for private consortia to bid for. An 'in-house' team (the prison management, backed by the POA) was allowed to compete and won. The regime they have provided in the new gaol is exceptional for a British prison. Prisoners are out of their cells for 16 hours a day, have access to showers, phones, exercise, gym. There is work at a basic pay rate of £8 per week (compared to, for example, the £2.75 average at HMP Wymott at the time of last year's riot there). Night time 'bang-up' is at 9.30pm, probably the latest in any prison in the country.

The new prison is not a holiday camp – but it does offer basic humane conditions. This is an indisputable victory for those who stood up four years ago and blew the lid off the dustbin that was then Strangeways.

I and K wings of the old prison reopened in 1991, just nine months after the revolt. Conditions there are dire, as bad or worse than before April 1990; there have been several suicides. This regime has been deliberately kept as harsh as possible so that the men gaoled there will be prepared to sacrifice their rights in order to leave. The first prisoners who were moved from I and K wings

to the new gaol had to sign a 'compact', a practice strongly recommended by the Woolf Inquiry and certain to continue, promising to behave and work in a manner required by the regime. In return, the 'regime' promises to treat them humanely.

The 'compact' is a cynical way of buying compliance. It is an agreement between two completely unequal parties. The prisoner promises to 'toe the line' in return for being treated with basic human dignity. The most iniquitous clause states that, on the sole word of one officer, privileges can be withdrawn for seven days and there is no appeal. The new prison has far better physical conditions than the old but is designed for maximum control with landings half the size of the old ones, gated off in the middle.

I and K wings continue to operate alongside the new wings. They serve as a reception centre and unofficial punishment block. They are the stick and the new wings are the carrot. In most gaols you may end up in the punishment block, here you start there and work, or promise to work, your way upwards and onwards.



... and the old. Paul Taylor on the roof of Strangeways, April 1990

Some weeks ago, leaving the prison after the visit, I saw a prison officer I recognised, a big fat man called Duffy. Mr Duffy has thrown his size and weight about at Strangeways for many years. He has punched and kicked many prisoners many times, usually in the company of other punching and kicking officers. Everyone connected with Strangeways knows about Duffy; he is the latest in a long line of top 'dogs': Kearns, Baldwin, Shires, Brown ... So why, in this new model prison, are his type still there?

The answer is because he's on security; he's one of the 'burglars', the men who 'spin' (search) the cells. 'Good screws' who search your cell do so with respect to the fact that you live there; it is your home; it is per-

... And there is another 'left-over' from the bad old days, writes former Strangeways prisoner, ERIC ALLISON. What made Strangeways a hell-hole was not just the appalling conditions but the domination of a small group of power-crazed, brutal screws.

sonal. The 'dogs' show no respect; they tip things up, tear photographs off walls etc. They do so to provoke whoever's cell they are searching and they often succeed. The protester will then be dragged down to the block, beaten and, if he is badly marked, charged with assault to justify the marks. ('Had to restrain him, Sir.')

The 'burglars' also form the nucleus of the 'heavy mob'. They are usually first on the scene when the alarm bell goes following the observation of a perceived 'incident'. Most 'incidents' are minor – two men merely slugging each other, for example. But these screws do not want consultation, only confrontation.

Which leaves me with only one question to the Prison Department, the Strangeways management and especially the POA: if you seriously expect prisoners and their supporters to believe your words about improving prison conditions, why do you continue to have the likes of Duffy on your landings? You know these bullies represent a totally different view from the one you publicly purport to hold. If you want to prove you are seriously committed to improving the lot of prisoners, do so by getting rid of them.

STOP PRESS

Just two weeks after the opening of the 'new Strangeways', the majority of prisoners, nearly all of whom are unconvicted (and therefore entitled to be treated as innocent) chose not to go to work and as a consequence are now locked in their cells all day.

On 18 March Alan Lord, Tony Bush, Barry Morton, John Murray and Mark Azzopardi were sentenced to 18 months imprisonment for escaping from Manchester Crown Court during their trial for participation in the 1990 revolt. Mark Azzopardi was given a further two years for escaping on a previous occasion on the way from Hull prison to court. David Bowen is still awaiting his trial for the Hull escape. These men need your solidarity. Please write and show your support.

Tony Bush, HMP Leicester, Welford Road, Leicester LE2.

Barry Morton (CV0221), HMP Long Lartin, South Littleton, Evesham, Worcs WR11 5TZ.

John Murray, HMP Frankland, Finchale Avenue, Braxside, Durham DH1 5YD.

Mark Azzopardi, HMP Full Sutton, Moor Lane, York YO4 1PS.

David Bowen (DA0146), HMP Nottingham, Perry Road, Sherwood, Nottingham.

Alan Lord is in the block at Whitemoor but is likely to be transferred very soon to the Hull Special Unit.

Full Sutton update

Following Mark Stoner-Seed's article on the Full Sutton 'fashion show' in FRFI 117 and its circulation around the gaol, the governor in charge of 'casual clothing' asked for assurance from the 'workers' they had no complaints and, just in case, gave them a £30 bonus! (If FRFI offers Mark a regular fashion column, will the Full Sutton rag-trade employees eventually receive the national average wage?) The inquest on Jimmy Walker who committed suicide in the Full Sutton block, has been transferred for hearing to Hull.

POW's birthdays

Martina Anderson D25134
HMP Durham, Old Elvet
Durham DH1 3HU
16 April

Eddie Butler 338637
HMP Full Sutton
York YO4 1PS
17 April

Patrick McLaughlin LB83694
HMP Parkhurst, Newport, Isle of Wight, PO30 5NX
2 May

Patrick McLaughlin is a framed prisoner

Patrick Magee B75881
HMP Full Sutton
29 May

Britain's racist system of justice

Racist courts

Ishtiaq Ahmed is fighting to prove his innocence. He was convicted of murder on the testimony of one witness who made five different statements and another who has admitted lying under duress. Ishtiaq's girlfriend, whose evidence would have exonerated him, was put under so much pressure to change it that she later made a formal complaint resulting in disciplinary action against the officer involved. At the trial, the judge announced that a large crowd of black people would attend to intimidate the jury, which was completely untrue, and ordered the arrest of a black law student who was taking notes. One of the two police officers in charge of the case was later suspended; the other sacked for dishonesty.

Write to Ishtiaq Ahmed (WV2288) at HMP Wormwood Scrubs, Du Cane Road, London W12 0AE.

Racist prisons

FRFI has received this account of the racist treatment received by remand prisoner, Jimmy King, in Leicester prison.

'I have never come across so many racist prison officers in all my life in one establishment. I have received verbal threats from prison officers and had a lot of trouble with the inmates placed in my cell. On 26 February I was again given a new cell-mate, who had not washed for some time and had no intention of washing. I asked to be removed from my cell for personal hygiene. On the way to the block I heard officers saying "We got the bastard!" and realised they had been baiting me all along.

On arrival in the segregation unit ... there was a large number of heavy-set men waiting for me. They told me to get in the cell and keep my mouth shut. I asked for my toiletries,

letters and radio ... four or five then entered my cell. I began to back away, saying I only wanted my property. They formed a half circle around me and stated I was on my own down here and I get whatever they want to give me and if I want to argue about it, do it now. One of them told me I had an attitude problem and was gonna stay down here and its us who feed and exercise you so you just shut your black mouth and maybe you might get your food and we might remember to exercise you.'

Readers are asked to write and complain to the governor of HMP Leicester, Welford Road, Leicester.

Racist Home Office

Supporters of Kashmiri political prisoners, Qayyum Raja and Mohammed Riaz, demonstrated outside the Home Office on 18 March. The men

were gaoled in 1984 for kidnap and murder of an Indian diplomat. Both were extremely minor participants but were scapegoated because the main protagonists managed to flee the country. They were given 18 and 12 years for kidnap and concurrent life sentences for murder. The judge's recommendation on how long they should serve was not revealed until 1993 as 15 and 10 years, when they also discovered the Lord Chief Justice had increased it to 21 and 16 and the Home Secretary finally settled on 25 and 20. Their situation raises serious issues about life sentence policy, particularly its use in political cases.

The Free Riaz and Qayyum Campaign can be contacted at PO Box 102, Bradford BD3 8YT, 0274 663095.

Further protests are planned.

Nicki Jameson

STOP PRESS – BELMARSH

Prisoners in the Category A unit at Belmarsh are being constantly harassed and wound up by staff. Patrick Hayes has been banned from receiving a copy of the pamphlet *One-off*. Visitors are being forced to wait up to two hours. On St Patrick's night the unit was deliberately locked down. Prisoners responded by setting fire to cells. There were more cell fires a week later, following which the wing was cleared and all inmates held in the yard with guard dogs. One republican prisoner is on a dirty protest.

Trotwatch slates SWP

■ **Carry on recruiting: Why the SWP dumped the 'downturn' in a 'dash for growth'**, Trotwatch, 1993, 48pp, £2.95

Written from an anarchist standpoint, this pamphlet is a sharp and perceptive critique of the British Socialist Workers Party (SWP). It details, with wit and verve, the SWP's sectarianism, its unprincipled changing of positions to facilitate recruitment, its dishonesty and its hypocrisy. It is best when exposing the SWP's opportunist grovelling before the Labour Party and TUC. The authors understand that:

'From its earliest days, the SWP/IS has managed to combine a theoretical critique of the Labour Party and trade union officialdom, and an *actual allegiance* to both wings of the bureaucracy at every crunch point in the class struggle.'

The point is proved by citing masses of evidence, drawn from SWP publications, on the organisation's response to the 1992 pit closure campaign, the anti-poll tax campaign and the SWP's support for the Labour Party at General Elections. On a fundamental aspect of socialist strategy, the anarchists of Trotwatch are more consistent and revolutionary than the Marxists of the SWP:

'Any genuine rise in the level of class struggle requires workers, and the working class as a whole, breaking free of the trade union and Labour hierarchy and asserting direct control over the battle for their interests. A battle that

sees the barons of the labour movement as part and parcel of the enemy. Otherwise the impact of the Labour Party's exercise of class power will certainly be to depress the level of the class struggle.'

In contrast the SWP at every critical turning point never fails to side with the Labour Party and the official trade union movement. It has developed an inane position on elections to justify calling for the return of a Labour government. In the SWP's own words: '... the only decisive test is practice, therefore we are for another Labour government' and 'We are for everything that forces the Labour Party into a position where its



policies and practice can be tested in the eyes of millions of people.'

In 1979 these policies had been tested for five years, in the eyes of tens of millions of people! The Labour Party had resorted to monetarist policy, cut public expenditure,

had effectively, in the SWP's own judgment, 'derailed an incredibly powerful wave of industrial militancy' ... But the SWP still called for a Labour victory!

The SWP's loyalty to the Labour Party is closely tied up to its subordination to the organised British trade union movement. The SWP has contempt for the working class as a whole, reserving its 'respect' only for 'workers at the point of production'. This contempt was most evident during the anti-poll tax campaign. At first, the SWP attacked those who sought to build a community based non-payment campaign. The authors quote SWP publications claiming that 'community politics divert people from the means to win, from the need to mobilise working class activity on a collective basis ... The state machinery through fines, stopping of wages and so on can wear down community resistance ...'

The poll tax riot, because it was violent and took place outside the confines of the official movement, was regarded with some discomfort. A *Socialist Worker* editorial sermonised: 'Of course, no socialist believes rioting will beat the poll tax, but neither should any condemn the howl of rage which filled the fashionable West End last Saturday.'

But as soon as the SWP sniffed an opportunity to recruit new members from the efforts of those who did in fact build a community-based campaign, they cynically switched their position. Having begun by dismissing community resistance and non-

payment, the SWP ended by judging it the: 'cutting edge of a slow revival of combative working class action'. '(Eventually) resilient non-payment and riots in the streets brought down Thatcher.' But this new line was immediately forgotten when the pit closure campaign offered new opportunities to intervene in 'real working class struggles'.

Two aspects of this worthwhile pamphlet reveal the weakness of much of anarchist thought. A critique of the SWP's positions on the Labour Party and trade union movement cannot be fully adequate if it does not deal with the connection of British labour to British imperialism, for after all the Labour Party is a child of British imperialism. The pamphlet, however, says nothing on this question. Then there is the perennial difference between anarchists and Marxists on the question of the necessity for working class political organisation. The anarchists reject the need for such organisation. For them the SWP's reactionary positions flow from its adherence to the 'Leninist theory of the vanguard party' which is, according to the anarchists, hierarchical and anti-democratic. This debate we shall take up another time. Here we only ask comrades to consider how the RCG, whilst recognising the need for working class political organisation, has a position on the Labour Party closer to Trotwatch than that of the SWP. The SWP does have a reactionary, elitist and sectarian concept of a working class political organisation. But this should be attributed not to a Leninist theory, which the anarchists misunderstand, but to the SWP's middle class social position.

Eddie Abrahams

■ **The New Unemployed: Joblessness and Poverty in the Market Economy** by Frank Gaffikin and Mike Morrissey, Zed Books, 1992, £12.95

'A clear, cogent argument addressing many of the current debates' says the blurb on the back cover. That it certainly isn't. Far from illuminating the current debates, this book adds to the confusion in spite of the wealth of statistical material it has gathered together on the US, EC, British, and Irish economies (North and South). It is worth reading for this material, but it fails to put forward a theoretical standpoint which can explain the demise of Keynesianism, the shift to monetarism and the inexorable growth of unemployment and poverty over the last 24 years.

Essentially the book is trying to throw light on two conflicting positions in relation to unemployment. The first states that the growth of unemployment is the inevitable consequence of current economic developments. The second states that the growth of unemployment reflects a failure of policy 'as it did in the 1930s' (p28). The evidence in the book overwhelmingly supports the first position. However the book could never have been written if the authors' political instincts did not

The new unemployed



push them towards the second. Their conclusion that the 'approach to unemployment should ... embrace a specification of the conditions and circumstances of the necessary interventions in the market by a democratising state, and a willingness to adopt the best practices of those countries which have least suffered mass unemployment' (p199) is a retreat from objective economic analysis into the political wishful thinking so common among left social democrats.

The authors are aware that the Callaghan Labour government took the path towards monetarism before the ascendancy of Reaganomics and Thatcherism (p14). They even quote approvingly from an article which states 'ultimately Keynesian policy was replaced because in its accepted form, it could not deal with changes in the economy at the same time as overcoming or defusing the conflicts within society' (p15). Yet they can still argue that 'despite the deficiencies, the best prospect for the poor remains social democracy' and excuse its conversion to 'liberal economics' because it was done reluctantly and 'without the market evangelicism of the New Right.' (p192)

Why did the post-war social consensus underlying Keynesianism break down in the 1970s? Why has social democracy shifted to the right? To answer these questions it is necessary to have an understanding of the laws governing capitalism when a handful of major capitalist powers dominate and control the world economy, that is, to understand the

political and economic character of imperialism - a term that does not appear to enter the author's vocabulary or govern their way of thinking. Secondly, it is necessary to understand the class basis of social democracy and its relationship to the development of imperialism.

If you had this understanding you would know that the political consensus underlying Keynesianism broke down with the end of US dominance of the world economy and the return of inter-imperialist rivalries in the 1970s. And you would be able to explain why social democracy began an inevitable shift to the right at the same time. But then if you had that understanding you would have written a different book and not wasted the wealth of research and statistics contained in this book to produce a shamefaced defence of social democracy. You would then have done justice to the unemployed workers of the Belfast Centre for the Unemployed, where the authors worked, and from where the book emerged as a result of a project financed by the European Community's second poverty programme.

David Yaffe

Giap

■ **Giap: the Victor in Vietnam** by Peter Macdonald, Fourth Estate, 1993, £17.99

As US troops set off for the Gulf War, President Bush declared to the American people: 'This is not another Vietnam!' What an accolade to the fighting spirit of the Vietnamese people, and to the military genius of one man - General Vo Nguyen Giap.

Giap is the man the West would dearly love to forget. He destroyed the reputations and careers of his adversaries, Generals Navarre and Westmoreland, and his military successes still haunt the West.

The real story of the Vietnam War

is rarely told. Hollywood has spent the last twenty years producing a counterfeit history of US involvement in Indochina. This book is a comprehensive study of the life and achievements of General Giap, and seems to leave no stone unturned in the career of this great man.

Born in 1911 at An Xa village in Quang Binh province, Giap went on to found the Vietminh, lead them to victory over the French colonialists, and take on the might of the USA and defeat it. One of the most fascinating sections of the book covers the early years of the Vietminh as a fighting force. It is one of the great ironies of history that soldiers from the Office of Strategic Studies (OSS), precursors of the CIA, were parachuted into

Vietnam to help arm and train the Vietminh against the Japanese.

This book contains good accounts of the Battle of Dien Bien Phu, the Tet Offensive, the Siege of the Khe Sanh, and gives a good description of the 'life' of the Ho Chi Minh Trail. It also reminds us of the arrogant carve-up of the world by the superpowers after World War Two. In July 1945 at Potsdam, Roosevelt offered Vietnam to Chiang Kai-shek, but he declined the offer! Perhaps history had taught the Chinese what difficult customers the Vietnamese were to occupy and control.

Giap's father, sister and wife were all killed by the French for their politics. For his part he has dedicated his life to the Vietnamese struggle for

independence. He was commander-in-chief of the army for 30 years, and was involved in decision-making at the highest levels of government for nearly 50 years.

The air defences that Giap created around Hanoi and Haiphong were rated by the US as second only to NATO's highly sophisticated network for the defence of Western Europe. Giap is one of the major reasons why the USA, the most powerful nation in the world, became morally confused, militarily confounded, and financially embarrassed in Vietnam.

If like me you can't afford the price of £17.99 for this book, but would like to read it, then I can tell you that Camden libraries have a copy.

Peter Cadle

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Erratum

In our review of the film 'Proud Arabs and Texan Oilmen' (FRFI 117) the wrong address for obtaining video copies was given. To get your copies of this powerful documentary on the Gulf War contact Platform Films, 6 Cromer House, Cromer Street, London WC1H 8DB or tel: 071 278 8394.

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LETTERS write to FRFI BCM Box 5909 London WC1N 3XX

Ireland: British government on the defensive

Sarah Bond's article 'Talks on Ireland: what's peace got to do with it?' (FRFI 116) requires comment. Whilst I cannot comment on the article overall, as an example I would like to comment on Sarah Bond's claim that Britain could shift its policy on Ireland because of, amongst other reasons, 'the turn of the revolutionary tide against anti-imperialist movements internationally and with the Republican movement much weakened and on the defensive.'

It is Sarah Bond's claim of a much weakened Republican movement being on the defensive that I find unsustainable in the real, material world. Looking first at Sinn Fein's electoral success in last year's local government elections, Sinn Fein received the largest percentage increase in votes of any party, the biggest number of first preference votes in Belfast, and became the largest party in Armagh. This success must be seen against the intensified activities of pro-British loyalist death squads against nationalists and Republicans; 12 Sinn Fein members alone murdered in the period between the two local government elections. Even more important is the Joint Statement by John Hume and Gerry Adams which stated: 'an internal settlement is not a solution' and 'that the Irish people as a whole have a right to national self-determination' (AP/RN June 1993). The Major-Reynolds 'Peace' proposals are a belated reaction to the Irish Peace Initiative. The Downing Street Declaration showed a British government on the defensive; the revelations of long term contacts between the British government and Irish republicans confirms that it is Britain that is on the defensive.

If Sarah Bond is referring to the IRA being much weakened and on the defensive is it the same IRA she wrote about in FRFI 114: 'In an unprecedented attempt to thwart the IRA's highly successful operation in London, armed roadblocks have been introduced across the square mile of the City.' Further on: 'The British ruling class knows it cannot defeat the Republican movement by these means: far more extensive measures in Belfast city centre have failed.' The New Year statement from the IRA (AP/RN 29 December 1993) contains a phrase that indicates the determination of the Republican movement: 'As we face into our 26th year of unbroken struggle...' Comrades and readers of FRFI, what other revolutionary organisation in Europe could sustain such a struggle?

ANTHONY BIDGOOD
Victoria, Australia

Communism and sexual morality

In FRFI 117, the article 'A greedy, sleazy elite' and more especially on the front cover there are numerous damning references to Tim Yeo and his adultery. Though there is an attempt to look beneath the issues, it does link 'sex, sleaze and superguns' under the same banner. But the concentration on sexual scandals leaves one feeling that FRFI takes the view that what Yeo and David Ashby did was morally wrong and on a par with financial corruption and arms dealing. Even if you don't take this view, then certainly many of the readers of FRFI will, especially here in Manchester and Blackburn where FRFI has a large Muslim readership, many of whom see adultery as immoral and the family as being central. For a full-page article like this not to give the communist position on sexual morality I believe is ill-judged.

This problem is heightened by the fact that it is unclear as to what the position would be. Marx and Engels condemn bourgeois marriage, but it is unclear to me whether this is in the same vein as their view of the state – that it will wither away – or that they oppose the bourgeois form. Though I don't want to take the ultra-left position that we need a fully formulated position on the issue, to side-step the issue altogether is equally misguided especially as these moral values have taken deep root in the working class. It is clear that issues like this are not solved by socialism as can be seen by the 1926 divorce debate in the USSR and the continuation of machismo and homophobia after the Cuban revolution. We should not shy away from these controversial issues where these reactionary views are not confined to the Tory moral right.

JOHN WALKER
Manchester

PS If it is of any value to you, in the recent debate on the reduction of the age of consent for homosexuals (brought by a Tory ex-minister), six Labour MPs actively voted against both 16 and 18, along with the Tory moral right: Gerald Bermingham (St Helen's S); Lawrence Cunliff (Leigh); Jimmy Dunnachie (Glasgow Pollock); Roy Hughes (Newport E); David Marshall (Glasgow Shettleton); Michael J Martin (Glasgow Springburn).

Lay off teachers!

In your last issue 117 February/March 1994, I read your usual excellent material. However, Susan Davidson's article 'Class War' surprised me. While she quite rightly criticises John Patten and Ron Dearing over U-furns in the national

curriculum, calling Dearing 'the friend of the teachers' for lightening their workload and therefore the enemy of working class children is *crap!*

I feel Susan Davidson has oversimplified the issues here. Most teachers would probably have little objection to the national curriculum workload if lots of it were not ritualistic and nonsensical. The main problem teachers had with this added workload was due to the fact that their classes are already far too large due to government cutbacks. If classes were a reasonable size students would receive a much higher standard of education; teachers cannot be expected to teach 30+ students and deliver what the government wanted in the national curriculum of 1988 Education Act.

So lay off teachers! Many of whom come from working class backgrounds and are committed to increasing the standard of education in Britain, but find their hands tied by various government activities.

The solution as you know is a) smaller classes b) more funding and more respect given to the vocation of teaching c) more finances being pumped into education.

GED IRWELL
Manchester 8

A voice for justice

Thank you for the recent issue of the paper.

Your article on the decline of state welfare was well-written. I really see a future where most of us will be used for slave labour: 'back to work' for £10 extra on top of the £44 giro ...

Also I noted the small column on history rewriting re Ken Livingstone. I always stated the man was no more than an apologist for the new style 'Tory type' Labour. In *The Dirty War* by Martin Dillon there is a passage about one UDA executioner known as Albert 'Ginger' Baker. Ken Livingstone in 1988 took it upon himself to take a statement from Baker when he was brought over for a short while from the Crumlin Road Prison, Belfast to Frankland Prison. What, I ask, was the purpose of Mr Livingstone taking the statement from Baker, and never using the information to show the powerfully dangerous capabilities of the Loyalist terror gangs against the Nationalist communities ...?

I compliment you on your coverage of 'Women – Time For The Real Fight'. I am glad someone's given coverage to the subject: it seems politically and financially that women are taking backward steps from the emergence of some form of power in the late '60s to the mid '70s: it is as if feminism had lost its way ...

I look around and see plenty of the



homeless and jobless in the South West and wonder who's going to be their voice for justice? FRFI are now about the only group who preach justice for a wide amount of people and causes.

I wish you much luck in your campaigns in FRFI, I am enclosing a cheque for you to donate to whichever cause you believe most in need.

JACKIE ORCHARD
Cornwall

Sinister attack on workers' rights

A High Court judgement, confirmed in the Court of Appeal, has dealt a sinister blow to workers' rights. In a test case of the 1993 Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Act, the College Employers' Forum maintained that a national strike called by the further education union NATFHE for 1 March was illegal. They claimed that under the new legislation, unions must submit the names and addresses of all members being balloted for any form of industrial action to the employers. NATFHE had not done this; the proposed strike was therefore illegal. Following this judgement NATFHE called the action off.

When this new legislation was debated in Parliament, government ministers were at pains to give reassurances that there was no intention to force trade unions to breach the confidentiality of members or to hand over lists of names and addresses. But judges follow the law literally, which means interpreting its intention as they see it written. However, they may not refer to Hansard, White Papers, or any other such documents when offering their interpretation. What the government has done, with the connivance of the judges, is create a menacing precedent which threatens workers' right to belong to trade unions. Union members being balloted for action can be singled out by employers, national lists of 'undesirable' employees can be more efficiently compiled.

Neither the TUC nor the Labour Party have challenged the decision and the legislation. Meanwhile, NATFHE is enfeebled, fearing that if it calls industrial action to defend colleges and lecturers' rights, and makes even a handful of mistakes in the membership lists, the courts will rule against it. The TUC and Labour Party are not just useless, they are dangerous.

LEN BAXTER
South London

RCG PUBLIC MEETINGS

NORTH LONDON

Class law – Tory order

Monday 18 April 7.30pm
Speaker: Nicki Jameson
Neighbourhood Centre, Greenland Street, London NW1
(2 mins walk from Camden Town tube)

SOUTH LONDON

In the name of justice

Tuesday 19 April 7.30pm
A discussion of the issues behind the film 'In the Name of the Father'

South Africa: after the election, what future for the working class?

Tuesday 10 May 7.30pm

Both at 'Peaches' Club, 143 New Cross Road, London SE14 (nearest tube New Cross Gate)

BLACKBURN

The New Warlords – book launch and public meeting

Saturday 21 May 2pm
Bangor Street Community Centre,
Brookhouse, Blackburn

For further details of any of the above meetings tel: 071 837 1688

CITY AA

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Saturday 9 April 8pm
The Locomotive, Jamestown Road,
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STRANGWAYS 1990:

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by Nicki Jameson and Eric Allison

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In Memoriam Victor Sabelo Phama

On 6 February Victor Sabelo Phama, a top military commander of APLA, armed wing of the PAC, was killed in a car 'accident' in Tanzania – almost certainly a political assassination. A militant and courageous leader of the armed struggle, he dedicated his life to the liberation of the Azanian people. We reprint here part of a poem written by Azanian revolutionary Karrim Essack as a tribute to Comrade Phama's life in the liberation struggle. It was read out at a commemoration meeting of APLA cadres in Tanzania before comrade Phama's body was flown back to South Africa for burial.

Comrade secretary
Comrade commander
We have lifted your garment
Soaked with dripping blood
Your precious gift, we shall guard
Even from our flowing tears

We shall hound, hunt and hit them
They will have no sleep
No rest
No peace
For they must learn
Our noble cause is invincible.

Fallen comrade
You have taught us
No greasy palm
can tempt or divide us
No Geneva
No villa
Can ever make us
Give up the fight
For our land and liberty
Our road is long
With raining bombs above

And exploding mines below
But our advance shall seize
and smash

And push the battle lines
globally
into the 21st century
Like you we shall fall
in tens
hundreds
thousands

But we shall go on and on
Even red be the rain
Until our motherland is
completely and finally free
With happy tears, we shall leave
our planet
and fly towards the sky
Out of our solar system
into the timeless universe
A bloodstained garment as a
guide
Towards our final destiny
Karrim Essack

Against a background of grant cuts, tuition fees and rent rises, it appears that the worst threat to student welfare this year is the leadership of the National Union of Students (NUS). Being the only union in the country which relies on government money, its actions over the past three months show that rather than bite the hand that feeds it, the NUS will try to limit and divert student opposition to the government's reforms. **STEVE** from Sheffield University reports.



Students fight grant cuts

When Kenneth Clarke inherited a £50bn budget deficit it was inevitable that those dependent on government spending would have to foot the bill. Student grants were on a long list of spending cuts. Yet the NUS Executive Committee cancelled a post-budget debate at the end of 1993 for fear of calls to action. At a recent seminar 'Higher Education - who should pay?' Lorna Fitzsimmons, NUS president, even went so far as to speculate that students might say 'yes please' to paying back their maintenance grants were they to increase. More recently she saw fit to apologise that 'we did not want to battle with the government'.

This attitude would be laughable if it were not so dangerous. Students starting courses this September will face debts of at least £5,500 in student loans alone at the end of their three years. This will ensure that only the children of the better off are given the chance to go to university.

The complacency of Fitzsimmons

and her cronies is also reinforced at the local level. Quintin Sommerville, President of the Edinburgh University Students Association, speaking at the same seminar as Fitzsimmons, boasted that the grant system is not something 'we'll be stuck with much longer'.

As student anger manifested itself in a wave of occupations from London to Glasgow, individual student unions were quick to divert the protests into harmless channels. The University of North London's 'media virus' letter-writing campaign was admitted to be a means of stopping occupation. The Students Union in Sheffield called the police and supported the management's high court injunction to remove students from occupation. It denounced 'unofficial' action and instructed its members to fax their MPs and wear a badge.

NUS EC member Andrew Brammer was immediately suspended for supporting University of East Anglia students in occupation. Plans for a

national demonstration earlier this year were immediately scrapped in favour of a 'Day of Action' so protests would be local and divided. Eventually, as pressure built up, a national demonstration was called by a 'Student Activist Alliance' for 23 February. But even this group put out a leaflet describing plans to march to parliament as 'very stupid or not at all serious ... a stunt', preferring to take students on a stroll to the Imperial War Museum. On the day a large number of students were determined to march on Parliament and managed to break through police lines in an impressive show of defiance.

Complacency amongst our unions not only fails to achieve results but also forces further action to be deemed 'unofficial' and thus illegitimate. The four students at Sheffield who narrowly escaped expulsion after a 'trial' lasting 15 hours know this only too well. The message is clear: students are angry and only a strong independent movement can

channel this anger into effective action. A union which doesn't defend its members is not a union at all.

SUSAN from Sussex University writes ...

Since 1990 when loans were introduced and students were denied the right to claim housing benefit and income support, students have faced an increasing level of debt. A survey last year indicated that the average debt per student was £706, with university students as a whole owing over £12m. Currently the maximum student grant for a year stands at £2,265, well below the essential term-time expenditure recently estimated at £3,715 by the NUS.

On 23 February 10,000 students marched through central London to show their anger at grant cuts. The demonstration was called by the 'Student Activist Alliance' after the repeated failure of the NUS EC to call a national demonstration.

At Sussex University it was the Student Poverty Campaign - a society of radical left-wing students - which organised to get students to the march. It meant continuous and persistent pressure on our NUS officials to get coaches subsidised and leaflets and posters printed. In total, eight coaches went up from Brighton, 300 students from Sussex University and the rest from Brighton University, Brighton Technology College and sixth-form students.

In the face of growing anger and growing independent organisation of students at the grassroots level which was demonstrated on 23 February, the NUS EC has now been forced to call a demonstration on 4 May. All students must organise and mobilise on their campuses to ensure that this demonstration is much larger and even more militant than the last one. We cannot rely on the NUS - it is up to us to build a militant independent movement to fight the attacks on student rights and living standards!

Stop the M11 Link Road

The M11 Link Road is due to run from Wanstead to Hackney in East London. Spanning 3.5 miles with underground and flyover parts, it requires the destruction of over 300 homes, with 1,000 people being made homeless, environmental destruction and community dissolution.

Active, inventive, consistent and determined opposition to the road building and home-destroying has upset the Department of Transport's plans from the start. Protesters have risked life and limb as the contractors, bailiffs and police have become more violent.

16 February 1994 saw 'Operation Barnard': the razing to the ground and reduction to a building site of a row of Edwardian houses with trees and gardens around, declared part of independent Wanstonia. 700 police, 300 security guards, bailiffs, members of the Territorial Support Group riot-clad police arrived at 7am to face at least 300 protesters spectacularly barricaded into the houses. No stairwells left, ditches and trenches around the properties, people locked to household appliances. It took 11 hours to remove everyone from rooms, rooves and trees, using sledgehammers, crowbars, heavy machinery and cherry-pickers, putting people at risk as demolition took place around them.

The day's effort cost, at conservative estimate, £250,000. £275,000 has been spent on previous operations. 24-hour security patrols are costing the contractors Norwest Holst about £160,000 per month and rising. Police costs since September are £470,000. Legal costs to the Department of Transport have amounted to approximately £1 million.

The government is sanctioning the



Operation Roadblock protesters halt work on the M11 Link Road

£23bn road-building programme. The oil industry and car lobby are powerful forces behind it. The Department of Transport and Secretary of State for Transport John McGregor continue the propaganda. (Meanwhile the Secretary of State for the Environment makes ineffectual noises about the denial of the great car economy.) James Arbothnot, local MP, takes no action. The police's heavy-handedness increases, both directly and indirectly using anonymous security guards to do their dirty work. The police, wary of negative press, turn a blind eye to assaults on demonstrators by security guards.

Car exhaust emission has gone up by 73 per cent since 1981. 19 million

people in Britain are exposed to pollution levels exceeding EEC guidelines. Up to 33 per cent of children in heavily polluted areas are showing signs of asthma.

The fight along the route of the M11 extension is the fight for homes and the environment and the right to protest itself. This is the work of a system and government intent on the destruction of more and more parts of humanity that exist under the harshness of capitalism and the destruction of all those who seek to fight back.

Long live all who oppose this system!
Contact the No M11 Link Campaign on 081 558 2638.

Hannah Callier

Operation Roadblock

Operation Roadblock is a national rota which is designed to bring 100 protesters a day to stop the insane M11 Link. It is hoped that the roadblock will achieve many things. The first consumer protest - you choose the day and we will book you in! - it is hoped it will make peaceful civil disobedience as normal and necessary as brushing your teeth or eating dinner.

It started on 15 March when 50 lollipop ladies placed a carpet zebra crossing over an 8-foot fence topped with barbed wire. They then assisted the 100 or so pedestrians over the fence. And so Operation Roadblock was initiated (with humour and determination) and what unfolded over the following week is one of the most important points of resistance in the country at present. A month after the massive eviction in Wanstead, it has taken the campaign and ideas of peaceful political intervention into a new phase.

The eviction of Wanstead was a huge event both in reality and in the media. The protesters' determination has become a beacon of hope to many, while the DoT's sad project is losing credibility with the speed of falling lead. However, compared with the saturation coverage of Wanstonia, Operation Roadblock was greeted with silence. Operation Roadblock has none of Wanstonia's sentimental appeal. Through direct action, people are taking control and demanding the future they want.

The pedestrians, far from being content just to cross the fence, dodged the mass of security guards and occupied the crane for the entire day. Four protesters, told that if they refused to climb down they would be

charged with £50,000 worth of criminal damage, shouted 'Look around you, you are responsible for this destruction and you have the cheek to accuse us of criminal damage!' Four ordinary, local men taking extraordinary action to save their environment. This is one of the many examples of how Operation Roadblock has managed to encompass and channel the anger of the local and national population.

Without the massive police presence, contractors would have done not a minute's work since the block started, and would have been crippled by massive security costs (they still employ 120 guards in Wanstead alone). The police have abused their powers by both threatening and making mass arrests. But Roadblock's success is not dependent on financial pressure on contractors or police costs (even so, a useful by-product in the region of millions of pounds). Its success lies in capitalising on a huge and continuous resistance against the market machine. It lies in getting people to fight for the environment, not from their sofas but from their hearts, and it is a school where all those who pass through learn the true politics of change.

Paul Morozzo
No M11 Campaign